

Explore Your Community's Migration Stories

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Seeking Out Hidden Migration Stories

Overview

Students will become "story explorers" to discover both visible and invisible migration stories in their community using structured observation and thinking routines. The lesson works in any setting and concludes with community sharing. This three-part series aligns with the Re-Imagining Migration Learning Arc: Day One focuses on **Moving Stories**. Day Two focuses on using the stories to better **understand** the significance of migration on communities. Day 3 focuses on **Taking Action** where students reflect and share about the migration stories they have documented.

2.5 Day Activity (50 min class period per day)

Grade Level: 5-8

(This lesson can easily be scaled up or down for younger or older students, suggested modifications below)

Essential Questions

- We all have a story of migration - what is my story? What is yours? How do our stories connect with others in our community?
- What can we learn from the many visible and invisible stories of migration around us?
- How can we approach the sharing of stories of migration with understanding and compassion?

Learning Objectives

Knowledge Outcomes. Students will understand that:

- Communities are shaped by multiple migration stories over time
- Some migration narratives are prominently featured while others remain invisible
- Historical sources provide different types of evidence about the past

Skills Outcomes. Students will be able to:

- Use structured observation techniques to gather information
- Analyze primary and secondary sources for historical evidence
- Compare and contrast visible and invisible historical narratives

Disposition Outcomes. Students will develop:

- Empathy for diverse migration experiences
- Curiosity about their community's history and residents
- Critical thinking about whose stories get told and why

Material

- [Advice for Choosing a Community Space to Explore](#) (For Teachers)

Day 1: Pre-work (10 Minute Activity)

- [K-W-L organizer](#) (For students)

Day 2: Mapping the Community (Full Day)

- [Migration Story Exploration Mapping - City/Town Neighborhood](#) (For students)
- [Migration Story Exploration Mapping - Inside School](#) (For students)
- Pencils/ Pens
- Clipboards

- Camera / Phone for documentation

Day 3: Reflection (Full Day)

- [Migration Stories Walking Tour Assessment](#)

Standards

These standards include: NCSS Thematic Standards, Common Core State Standards, C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards, CASEL Framework Social Emotional Standards.

Social Studies Standards (NCSS Thematic Standards)

- **Theme II: Time, Continuity, and Change** - Students analyze historical change and continuity
- **Theme III: People, Places, and Environments** - Students explore human-environment interactions
- **Theme IV: Individual Development and Identity** - Students examine factors that influence personal and cultural identity
- **Theme V: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions** - Students understand how institutions affect people
- **Theme X: Civic Ideals and Practices** - Students develop civic engagement skills

Common Core State Standards

Reading Standards:

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-12.7** - Integrate quantitative or technical information expressed in words with visual displays
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-12.1** - Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics

Speaking and Listening:

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K-12.1** - Engage effectively in collaborative discussions
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.K-12.4** - Present information clearly and concisely

C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards

- **Dimension 1:** Developing questions about migration patterns and community history
- **Dimension 2:** Applying disciplinary concepts (geography, history, civics)
- **Dimension 4:** Communicating conclusions and taking informed action

Social-Emotional Learning (CASEL Framework)

- **Social Awareness** - Understanding diverse perspectives and experiences
- **Responsible Decision-Making** - Ethical considerations in storytelling

WIDA ELD Standards

- **Standard 1: Social and Instructional Language**
 - Engage in collaborative discussions during K-W-L activities and community exploration
 - Participate in turn-and-talk conversations about migration observations
 - Present their walking tour findings to classmates
- **Standard 2: The Language of Language Arts**
 - Analyze visual and textual evidence (street signs, plaques, historical markers)
 - Write narrative descriptions in tour guide style
 - Compare and contrast visible vs. invisible migration stories
- **Standard 4: The Language of Social Studies**

- investigate local history and geography through community exploration
- analyze primary sources (buildings, monuments, street names)
- use social studies inquiry skills (observe, question, analyze, conclude)

This lesson aligns with the **Re-Imagining Migration Approach** which builds off of **The Framework, Learning Arc, and Dispositions** developed by Veronica Boix-Mansilla at Harvard Project Zero.

Day 1: Pre-Work

This could be done as a pre-activity the day before.

SWABT: Students will be able to identify their prior knowledge and generate inquiry questions about local migration stories, and plan observation techniques for a community investigation of local migration.		
Activity	Timing	Instruction
Opening Circle Discussion	15 min	- Every place has moving stories: some we hear all the time, and some are hidden. Today students are going to be story explorers to explore the visible and invisible migration stories in their community. - Lead a discussion using K-W-L organizer. Ask students to reflect in writing, a turn-and-talk, on the first two questions. Students should not fill in the last question right now. - As a full group, ask a few students to share their answers. - Explain that as a class, students are going to be exploring a particular local neighborhood in search of stories of migration. Students should be looking for both: Visible Stories: Migration stories that are easy to find because they're celebrated or well-known in your community. <i>Examples: Statues or plaques honoring immigrants, stories about your town's founders, famous immigrant families everyone knows about, cultural festivals, immigrant-owned businesses with their story displayed</i> Invisible Stories: Migration stories that are all around us but harder to discover because they're not widely shared or celebrated. <i>Examples: The story of who built your school building, families who moved here for work but aren't famous, people who came as refugees, women who immigrated but their husbands get the credit, workers who helped build your downtown but aren't remembered</i> The key difference: Visible stories are the ones your community already talks about and celebrates. Invisible stories are just as important, but you have to be a Explorer to find them. - Ask students what tools they have to gather evidence. Possible ones that you want to highlight: - Eyes (what do we see?) - Ears (who can we ask?) - Hands (what can we touch/find?) - Hearts (how do we feel?)
Materials		
Advice for Choosing a Community Space to Explore (for teachers) K-W-L organizer (for students)		
Re-Imagining Teaching Note		
Essential Questions - We all have a story of migration - what is my story? What is yours? How do our stories connect with others in our community? - What can we learn from the many visible and invisible stories of migration around us? - How can we approach the sharing of stories of migration with understanding and compassion? Learning Arc Alignment: Moving Stories - focusing on understanding stories of migration Dispositions: - Understand Perspectives: Others And One's Own - Inquire About Migration With Care And Nuance		

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|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain that tomorrow students will be exploring their community and looking for visible and invisible stories of migration |
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Advice for Choosing a Community Space to Explore (For Teachers)

Before running this activity, think about what community space you want students to explore. Below are suggestions for possible vibrant cultural spaces to have students explore. These spaces potentially will showcase the impact of multiple generations and/or multiple communities:

Outdoor Spaces

- **Main streets or commercial districts** (old storefronts, different architectural styles, business signs in multiple languages)
- **Residential neighborhoods with varied housing** (different eras of construction, yard decorations, architectural details)
- **Community gathering places** (libraries, community centers, religious buildings, parks)
- **Transportation hubs** (train stations, bus stops, historic routes where people first arrived)
- **Cemeteries or memorial spaces** (gravestones with different names/dates, memorial plaques)

Indoor Alternatives

- **Local history displays** (lobby of city hall, library local history room, school trophy cases)
- **Artifact collections** (bring in old photos, postcards, newspaper clippings, yearbooks)
- **Intergenerational interviews** (invite community elders to visit your space)

Things to consider:

What Makes a Space Migration-Story Rich:

- Evidence of different time periods (architectural styles, business types)
- Diversity indicators (multiple languages, varied cultural markers)
- Economic activity markers (old factories, markets, transportation)
- Community gathering evidence (meeting places, celebration spaces)

Safety & Permission Considerations:

- Stay within school/program boundaries or get proper permissions
- Choose well-lit, public spaces if going outdoors
- Have clear meeting points and emergency procedures
- Consider accessibility for all students

Exploration Options:

Option A: Outdoor Exploration (Neighborhood Walk)

- Walk 2-3 blocks maximum with clear boundaries
- Point out: different house styles, business signs, community centers, monuments
- Stop at 3-4 specific locations for focused observation
- Bring a simple neighborhood map for students to mark discoveries

Option B: Indoor Exploration (Classroom/Building)

- Post old photos of your community around the room
- Bring in artifacts (old postcards, newspaper clippings, yearbooks)

- Have students interview each other about family migration stories
- Explore school hallways for historical displays or older architectural features

Option C: Virtual Exploration (Using Technology)

- Use Google Street View to "walk" through historical vs. current neighborhood
- Show historical photos vs. current photos of same locations
- Use local library's online historical photo collections

Know-Want to know-Learn Community Migration Stories

Before the investigation:

K - What I KNOW about migration stories in our community:

W - What I WANT TO KNOW about migration stories in our community:

After the investigation:

L - What I LEARNED about migration stories in our community:

Still Want to Know: Write one question that you have that captures what you would like to know more about after your community exploration:

Day 2: Community Exploration

SWABT: Students will be able to systematically investigate their community for migration stories by using structured observation techniques to document physical evidence, identify potential sources for oral histories, and analyze their findings using a thinking routine to distinguish between visible and invisible migration narratives.		
Activity	Timing	Instruction
Community Migration Mapping	55 min	Before Lesson: Choose a community space that works with your timing, location, and objectives. Read through and consider options laid out in Advice for Choosing a Community Space to Explore handout. Scout your chosen space beforehand to identify 3-4 key observation points.
Materials		- Before you let students explore the chosen community space, identify and review clear boundaries to help ensure students’ safety. - Provide students with clipboards or hard surfaces for writing and pair students up with a buddy if you are exploring outside the classroom. - Pass out the Migration Story Exploration Mapping (Depending on if you are having students explore outside or inside school there are specific questions). Using these questions, invite students to find two buildings/locations/objects in the community space to explore and reflect on. Before sending students out to explore and document, walk through and model how they might fill in and answer their Mapping document. - Allow time for students in pairs to explore and conduct the mapping exercise. Note to Educators for during exploration: - Guide students through the routine at 2-3 focused stops - Model the thinking: "I see... I feel... I think... I wonder..." - Encourage specific observations rather than quick judgments - Help students connect their feelings to migration stories - Write down student wonders to revisit later Possible closing questions for students to consider: - What surprised you most? - Whose story do you want to know more about? - What stories are still missing?
Advice for Choosing a Community Space to Explore Migration Story Exploration Mapping - City/Town Neighborhood Migration Story Exploration Mapping - Inside School		
Re-Imagining Teaching Note		
Essential Questions - What can we learn from the many visible and invisible stories of migration around us? - How can we approach the sharing of stories of migration with understanding and compassion? Learning Arc Alignment: Understanding Migration - focusing on the journey and adjustment of migration Dispositions: - Understand Perspectives: Others And One’s Own - Inquire About Migration With Care And Nuance		

• Recognize Power & Inequities In Human Experience And Migration	• How can we find out more? • Who should hear these stories?
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Migration Story Exploration Mapping - City/Town Neighborhood

STEP #1 🔍 LOOK AROUND

Instructions: Look around the neighborhood with your partner. What do you see that might tell a migration story? Consider:

- Old buildings or houses
- Street names or signs
- Monuments or plaques
- Different types of restaurants or shops
- Churches, temples, or community centers
- Cemeteries or memorials
- Photos on walls

Jot down: What did you notice? _____

STEP #2 👂 LISTEN FOR CLUES

Who can tell you stories?

- Older neighbors or family members
- Shop owners or workers
- Librarians
- People at community centers
- Religious leaders
- School staff

Jot down: Who is one person in this community who might be able to teach us more about this community's stories of migration? _____

STEP #3 🕵️ DIG DEEPER

Instructions: With your partner choose two of these buildings or landmarks and answer the questions about them.

- ☐ 🏠 **Building Exploration** Look at older houses and buildings. Do they look different from newer ones? Are there any dates, names, or signs on them? What do you think these buildings were used for?
- ☐ 🛒 **Business Exploration** Visit local shops or restaurants. If possible, ask owners or workers: "How long have you been in this neighborhood? What brought your family here?"

- ☐  **Cemetery Exploration** Look at gravestones (if there's a cemetery nearby). What names do you see? Do you notice any dates or places mentioned that might tell you where people came from?
- ☐  **Food Exploration** What types of restaurants or food stores do you see? Do they represent different cultures or countries? What might this tell you about who lives in this neighborhood?
- ☐  **History Exploration** Look for historical markers, plaques, or signs. Is there a local library or community center with old photos or information about the neighborhood's past?
- ☐  **Street Sign Exploration** Look at the street signs around you. What are the streets named after? Do you see names of people, places, or things? Write down interesting street names and think about why the neighborhood might have been named this way. Do any names sound like they come from other countries or cultures?

Answers to Building / Landmark #1

Answers to Building / Landmark #2

STEP #4 DOCUMENT YOUR FINDINGS

Instructions: Choose one of the two objects you reflected on above. And reflect on the following questions (questions adapted from the Harvard Project Zero Thinking Routine):

 **SEE:** What do you observe? Describe exactly what's in front of you.

 **FEEL:** What emotions or feelings does this bring up for you?

 **THINK:** What do you think this tells us about migration stories in our community?

? **WONDER:** What questions does this make you want to ask? Who might have answers?

In addition, consider:

- ☐ Take a photo of this place or object (with permission)
- ☐ Draw a picture of this place or object

Migration Story Exploration Mapping - Inside School

STEP #1 🔍 LOOK AROUND

Instructions: Look around the neighborhood with your partner. What do you see that might tell a migration story? Consider:

- Old classrooms or building sections
- Names on buildings, wings, or rooms
- Plaques, dedications, or memorial displays
- Cultural displays or artwork on walls
- Trophy cases with names and dates
- Library books or historical displays
- Photos of past students, staff, or events

Jot down: What did you notice? _____

STEP #2 👂 LISTEN FOR CLUES

Who can tell you stories?

- Long-time teachers or staff members
- School secretaries or custodians
- Librarians or media specialists
- Principal or administrators
- Cafeteria workers
- School nurses
- Retired teachers who might visit

Jot down: Who is one person in this community who might be able to teach us more about this community's stories of migration? _____

STEP #3 🏠 DIG DEEPER

***Instructions: With your partner choose two of these school spaces or objects and answer the questions about them. ***

- 🏠 **Building Exploration** Look at different parts of the school building. When was it built? What names are on dedication plaques? Why were these people honored? Who might have built or funded it?

-  **People Exploration** Look at old yearbooks or photo displays. What names do you see? What migration stories might these families have? Think about the ethnic diversity of your school today, do you see that same diversity or demographics represented in older yearbooks? What does that tell us about our schools' migration stories?
-  **Library Exploration** Check the school library for local history books or old school newspapers. What migration stories are mentioned?
-  **Cafeteria Exploration** What foods are served? Ask cafeteria staff: "What's the story and decision behind some of the menu choices? Do they reflect our community?" Think about the identities and cultures of your classmates and schoolmates, whose identities represented in the dishes served in the cafeteria?
-  **Art Exploration** Look at murals, displays, or student artwork. What cultures or family stories do they represent? Think about the identities and cultures of your classmates and schoolmates, are their identities represented in these murals?

Answers to Building / Landmark #1

Answers to Building / Landmark #2

STEP #4 DOCUMENT YOUR FINDINGS

Instructions: Choose one of the two objects you reflected on above. And reflect on the following questions (questions adapted from the Harvard Project Zero Thinking Routine):

 **SEE:** What do you observe? Describe exactly what's in front of you.

 **FEEL:** What emotions or feelings does this bring up for you?

 **THINK:** What do you think this tells us about migration stories in our community?

? **WONDER:** What questions does this make you want to ask? Who might have answers?

In addition, consider:

- ☐ Take a photo of this place or object (with permission)
- ☐ Draw a picture of this place or object

Day 3: Reflection and Assessment

SWABT: Students will be able to synthesize their community exploration findings by reflecting on their learning and creating a migration stories walking tour that demonstrates understanding of both visible and invisible narratives in their community.

Activity	Timing	Instruction
Opening Reflection	15 min	- Bring students back together and have them individually or in pairs reflect on the mapping they have just accomplished. Have students return to the K-W-L organizer and now answer the last two questions on the bottom. - As a full group, ask students to reflect using Harvard Project Zero's "3 Whys" for Assessment. - Why #1: Why is this story important to you personally? - Why #2: Why might this story be important to our community? - Why #3: Why does this matter to the world?
Materials		
None		
Walking Tour Map Assessment	15 min	- Distribute the Migration Stories Walking Tour Map graphic organizer to each student. Explain that students should select their 5 most interesting or significant locations from their Exploration mapping work. Clarify that they are writing as tour guides - their audience is visitors who want to learn about migration stories in this community - Emphasize that each stop should both describe what visitors will see AND explain the migration story that location reveals - Consider providing some examples of what tour guide writing could look like (We have modeled this assessment off of the NYTimes 36 Hours Tour model, one idea could be to pull a few of their articles as models for students). - Remind students to use evidence from their Exploration mapping work to support their analysis - Clarify the difference between visible and invisible stories they should identify at each stop - As students work, circulate and look for evidence of understanding about: - How well students distinguish between visible and invisible migration stories - Connections students make between specific locations and broader migration patterns - Quality of evidence students use from their community exploration - Ability to write in an engaging, descriptive style while maintaining analytical depth
Materials		
Migration Stories Walking Tour Assessment		
Re-Imagining Teaching Note		
Essential Questions - What can we learn from the many visible and invisible stories of migration around us? - How can we approach the sharing of stories of migration with understanding and compassion? - Why do these stories matter to them, their community, and the world? Learning Arc Alignment: Taking Action, focusing on building a more inclusive society		

Dispositions: • Recognize Power & Inequities In Human Experience And Migration • Communicate And Build Relationships Across Difference • Take Action To Foster Inclusive And Sustainable Societies	• Wrap-up: Allow time for students to share one or two stops from their walking tours with the class, fostering discussion about the diverse migration stories discovered across the community. Notes and ideas for Assessment Indicators: • Students can identify both visible and invisible migration elements • Students expressed curiosity about community members' experiences • Students connect their discovery to broader migration patterns • Students demonstrates empathy for different migration experiences • Students shows growth from initial "Know" to final "Learned" responses
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Migration Stories Walking Tour Map

Your Community's Hidden and Visible Migration Stories

OVERVIEW: Your Migration Story Tour Introduction

Your Tour Introduction: *Imagine you're a tour guide welcoming visitors to explore the migration stories in your community. Write a 6-8 sentence introduction to your walking tour that addresses these three questions from our learning about migration:*

1. What can we learn about our community from the many visible and invisible stories of migration around us?
2. How do local cases of migration relate to global patterns of migration we might read or hear about?
3. How do these stories of migration connect to me

YOUR 5-STOP WALKING TOUR

As you write your stops on your tour below, consider some of the following questions you might highlight

- *In what ways are people's migration journeys similar and different from one another?*
- *How might the environment in the new land help or hurt newcomers' inclusion?*
- *What can we learn from individuals and groups who have addressed migration in the past?*

Stop #1: _____

Location/Address: _____

Your Tour Guide Description & Migration Story Analysis (4-8 sentences): *Write as if you're speaking directly to tour participants. Describe what they'll see AND explain the migration story this location tells.*

Is this a VISIBLE or INVISIBLE migration story? Why?

Stop #2: _____

Location/Address: _____

Your Tour Guide Description & Migration Story Analysis (4-8 sentences): *Write as if you're speaking directly to tour participants. Describe what they'll see AND explain the migration story this location tells.*

Is this a VISIBLE or INVISIBLE migration story? Why?

Stop #3: _____

Location/Address: _____

Your Tour Guide Description & Migration Story Analysis (4-8 sentences): *Write as if you're speaking directly to tour participants. Describe what they'll see AND explain the migration story this location tells.*

Is this a VISIBLE or INVISIBLE migration story? Why?

Stop #4: _____

Location/Address: _____

Your Tour Guide Description & Migration Story Analysis (4-8 sentences): *Write as if you're speaking directly to tour participants. Describe what they'll see AND explain the migration story this location tells.*

Is this a VISIBLE or INVISIBLE migration story? Why?

Stop #5: _____

Location/Address: _____

Your Tour Guide Description & Migration Story Analysis (4-8 sentences): *Write as if you're speaking directly to tour participants. Describe what they'll see AND explain the migration story this location tells.*

Is this a VISIBLE or INVISIBLE migration story? Why?

Closing Reflection

After creating your walking tour, what surprised you most about the migration stories in your community?

What would our community be like without these migration story?

How can we make sure these stories of migration aren't forgotten?

What questions do you still have about migration stories in your community?

Optional Extension Activity: Dig Deeper

Optional Extension Activity: Dig Deeper. For students who want to learn more about their discoveries

- Encourage students to conduct family and community interviews with neighbors or elders about specific locations and their histories (with adult permission and supervision);
- Use online resources like newspaper archives and historical photo collections, or connect directly with librarians and members of local historical societies who can guide students to relevant materials about buildings, streets, or cultural sites they discovered.
- Visit local archives and libraries to find historical materials, old photographs, and city directories, or connect with community organizations such as cultural centers, senior centers, or religious institutions that preserve migration stories from the students' area.

This lesson incorporates thinking routines from Harvard Project Zero's Visible Thinking initiative.

Learn more at: www.pz.harvard.edu/projects/visible-thinking