Paulina Gonzalez

Dr. Mary Warner

English 112B

November 17, 2020

Unit of Study: Immigration Stereotypes

**Rationale:**

Immigration is not a foreign word in the American vocabulary, but more often than not, mention of an immigrant or immigration leads people to think of stereotypes. Stereotypes are oversimplified assumptions of a particular group of people. Stereotypes vary between races, genders, sexuality, and religion, just to name a few. The initial perception when Americans think of immigrants is that they are thieves, Latinx, and illegal, but that is not true. Immigrants come from a variety of countries, and the vast majority don’t have a nefarious purpose for being in the states. All they want is to live ordinary lives. Here in the United States of America(US), all forms of media portray immigrants as Latinx, or illegal immigrants and make them second rate citizens. These stereotypes hurt the immigrant community. It hurts immigrants by making them scared to ask for help, which has forced immigrants to go underground in fear of feeling like they don't belong in the land of the free. The stereotypes concerning immigrants harm Latinx Americans and the overall immigrant population. Stereotypes are taught, meaning they can be untaught. I intend to have them learn and make their own opinions about immigration. To do so, I will be educating students about immigration and immigrants in a broader perspective and Amy Tan’s novel *The Joy Luck Club.*

Immigrants are not inherently evil. If stereotypes were right, then I would be a thief wreaking havoc in the Bay Area, but stereotypes aren't. I was 4-years-old when my mother, baby sister, and I got on a 5-hour plane ride to the US. I am an immigrant who at 9-years-old was reading in the 8th-grade level and was held back in ELD because school policy did not allow the Spanish-English students to join their monolingual peers until they graduated. I was allowed to join my classmates in their English lessons halfway through my 5th grade school year. They treated me differently due to my primary language, and in middle school, I learned that 21st century America would treat me differently because I was an immigrant. I heard my best friend in high school say that immigrants are pests that should leave the US and deal with their problems. After that, I did all I could to distance myself from the Latinx community and the immigrant community. Being stereotyped as a pest and seen as less than my friends kept me from understanding and accepting myself because I tried so hard not to be a stereotypical immigrant. I know I'm not the only one this has happened to, and for that reason, I believe students should learn to think for themselves and know all the information before they follow the conclusions someone else has told them is right.

I pulled *The Joy Luck Club* from its dusty shelves. Everyone else in my year except I had already read it for some class. Amy Tan wrote about four families, four immigrant mother’s stories with their American born children. I saw myself in the novel and was devoted to the storytelling of immigrants again, to seeing someone else’s view of being a minority. Amy Tan’s writing made me feel valid, and her usage of symbolism and honest opinion from the daughters got me to look at immigration in literature in a new light. One fact that amazed me was that all the stories were similar; they all sought a better life in the US. I saw it in several different novels, whether they are Asian, African, Latino, European, or anyone else; everyone came for the same reason. For that purpose, I believe everyone should see immigration separated from what the media has fixed to be the definition of an immigrant.

Immigrants should not be limited to a preconception done by the media. Immigration is a vital part of American culture. For centuries the United States has relied on immigrant labor to create new opportunities for innovation and ingenuity. On the iconic Lady Liberty, a recognized symbol of the American promise, has “The New Colossus” poem etched on it saying, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free". During the Trump Administration, the United States has shown increase amounts of xenophobia, increasing hate crimes. According to the FBI’s yearly report, the spike has increased since Trump’s election and will continue to do so for some time(NPR). Yet, even though the American immigration system makes it near impossible to enter the US, there are still immigrants coming in. There are still youths who are coming to the United States, seeking a better life than what they had at home. The mass media, since Trumps’ election, has shown immigrants, foreigners, and anyone who isn’t a white person as a threat to the American way of life. Immigration is typically referring to Latinos or Hispanics, directly attacking and showing immigration through one inaccurate lens. Students need to understand that there are multiple views of immigrants and should be able to recognize immigration to be something as simple as moving to a new house, not one ethnicity trying to ruin their perfect American Dream. It’s the educators’ job to teach students to think for themselves and not believe the preconception that they were taught. Through this Unit of Study, students will see the diverse community of immigration and learn to come to their conclusions rather than believing the stereotypes they were taught

**Introducing the Unit:**

1. The purpose of this unit is to help familiarize a diverse classroom of students with the immigration community. To get students to learn about immigrants, I will assign them to read pieces written by immigrants about their immigration experience. I will have a list of these stories from *My Immigration Story(MIS)* are assigned to students at random. The stories in MIS are biographical stories written by varied immigrants in their own words. The students are expected to answer the following questions about the stories.

* Who wrote the story?
* Where are they from?
* Why did they leave?
* Would you have imagined a story like this to have happened to someone like him/her/them? Why?
* Was this person someone you would deem worthy of entering the United States of America? Why or why not? If not, what would be the reason?
* Did this person enter the country legally or illegally? If illegal, do you think the government/body that deemed them unfit to enter the United States was right?

1. The questions would be kept private by entering their answers nameless in a closed box for me to grade later. The purpose of these questions and stories is meant to show the diversity of immigrants migrating to the US. This activity will broaden the students’ preconceptions of immigrants and challenge their idea of what an immigrant is. It will later help them when reading books dealing with immigration. I will create a list of novels that talk about immigration that are Young Adult novels. The purpose of having students pick from a varied list of books is that it will help students broaden their perspective of immigration through literature. The following books that I have on the list will not be the only ones about immigration. If the students have a particular YA in mind that they’d like to read, they may.

YA novels about immigration(As a reference but not limited to):

* *The Circuit by Francisco Jimenez*
* *Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan*
* *The Sun is Also a Star by Nicola Yoon*
* Any other Amy Tan novel
* *I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter by Erika Sanchez*
* *Americanized: A Rebel Without a Green Card by Sara Saedi*
* *American Street by Ibi Zoboi*
* *The Dangerous Art of Blending by Angelo Sumelis*
* *Denied, Detained, Deported: The Dark Side of American Immigration by Ann Bausum*
* *Down and Across by Arvin Ahmadi*
* *The Good Braider by Terry Farish*
* *Love, Hate and Other Filters by Samira Ahmed*
* *Out of Nowhere by Maria Padian*
* *American Dervish by Ayad Akhtar*
* *The Book of Unknown Americans by Cristina Henriquez*
* *The Newcomers: Finding Refuge, Friendship and Hope in an American Classroom by Helen Thorpe*
* *This Land is Our Land by Linda Barrett Osborne*
* *Shanghai Girl by Lisa See*
* *We Were Here by Matt de la Pena*

\* One thing that students must keep in mind is that they must choose a book which they find interesting enough to finish within two weeks. They may choose whatever book they want, but be prepared to discuss it in smaller groups.

1. During these two weeks, the students will have 15 minutes of SSR(Sustained Silent Reading). Then I will show some background on Chinese immigration to prepare them for *The Joy Luck Club* through lectures*.* The students will have a basic understanding of Chinese immigration and the significance San Francisco had on immigration overall during the first week. They will have a free-response quiz that will be about what was on the lecture this week. In the second week, I will talk about the influence immigrants have had in literature. I will be lecturing about authors and the influence immigration had on them leading up to discussing Amy Tan and how she uses immigration in her work. By the end of the week, the students will have another quiz, mainly on Amy Tan, while also touching on the other authors that were mentioned in class. The students will have writing assignments that will solidify the information in the lectures, in preparation for the quiz at the end of class they will have an **Exit Ticket**(An exit ticket will be them summarizing the lecture in one paragraph due on their way out of class).
2. Once they have finished the books, they will create a **Brown Bag** for it. Once students have created their **Brown Bag** for their book(This will be a mini-project that the students will do. More will be explained below), they will be placed into small groups and introduce their book by giving a summary of it, share three items in the **Brown Bag,** and describe what they think, either the author or narrator, intended to convey about immigration or immigrants through the novel. At the end of class, students will be well prepared to dive into the novel *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan as knowledgeable individuals.

* **Brown Bag:** A mini-project that should take one day to make and one day to present. The project will require students to have their book, a paper bag, Index cards, markers(Red, Blue, Black), scissors, paper clips.
  + Students will be asked to pick **two quotes, two scenes,** and **two characters/items/ideas** with page numbers and appropriate citation.
  + Students will cut one side of the paper bag and around the bottom so it can be opened up and show three squares. On the INSIDE of the bag, students will tape down their filled in index cards to each flap. QUOTES, SCENES, CHARACTERS/ITEMS/IDEAS NEED TO BE ON THE SAME FLAP. Once the index cards are securely taped, and all is in order the bag is to be neatly folded and held together with paperclips. On the FRONT of the bag write the book title, author and the student’s name then place them in a pile for safekeeping until they are used for the presentation.

(P.S. They will be something to show for the open house.)

**Presenting the text:**

1. The students will have their copies of *The Joy Luck Club* book with them. The students will already have information about Amy Tan and the life of Chinese immigrants during the 1950s to 1980s when the novel takes place. We will read the novel together in class. It will be done by **Popcorn Reading** and **Popsicle Stick Reading**. As the class reads, I will ask them questions on the book that will connect to them. The whole class won’t be just reading the novel but also looking at what it is saying about Chinese immigrants, mother-daughter relationships, the symbolism that is being used, and making sure that they are understanding what they are reading. Once the class finishes a chapter I will send them homework with questions about the said chapter.
2. During the reading of the book, I would assign sections of the class to keep track of one of the four families mentioned in the novel. They will draw a family tree as well as the story of each family member as well. Taking notes on the novel and marking pages would be best. By the end of reading the book, each student will have a family tree and that family’s history as far back as the book allows.
   1. For instance, if there is a chapter about the Woo family, specifically June Woo, then ¼ of the class will be writing about the Woo family’s events. The information that the students should include is the story of life in China, their migration, mother’s life, and the daughter’s(June) perspective of immigration and mother-daughter relationships.
   2. In tangent with taking notes of one of the four family’s students will be taking notes on the impact immigration had on their lives(the characters in the novel). Students will pay attention to the quality of life the mothers had in China(and June’s sisters), so they can think about what immigration means. There are four families in the novel, immigration won’t be the same for all of them, but it will be impactful in each of their lives.

**Finishing *The Joy Luck Club*:**

1. The novel is finished. The class is tired, and students will have gained a broader perspective on immigration and the perception of Chinese immigrants.
2. With the family tree, the class will be broken into groups of four. They will present their assigned family tree to their group. The group presentation will work as a refresher for the final test on the book.
3. Students will take a comprehension test on the novel and what we discussed in class. The test will have questions about immigration, events and their significance, and short essay questions.
   1. Ex: How does immigration make Amy Tan’s novel *The Joy Luck Club* a better piece of literature? How does Amy Tan’s Chinese Immigration story widen the lens for the perception of immigrants?

**Extending the Unit:**

1. To extend the novel, I intend to do a closing project. Something fun, as a break from the unit, but still look back at immigration through a broader lens. I will have my students watch three movies, *The Joy Luck Club*(some scenes will be skipped), *The Sun Is Also a Star,* and *Under the Same Moon.* The purpose of these movies is that they are from different people and emphasize how different cultures are in the media. Students will take notes while the movies are shown. They will say what they think to unifies them as an immigration story and reenact their favorite scene with a group or do a theatrical reading from *The Joy Luck Club*.
2. To end this long journey, students will read and analyze Amy Tan’s poem “Two Kinds”. A poem with symbolism, immigration, and a glance at Chinese American culture. This poem will be the topic of discussion during the **Socratic Seminar,** focusing on the poem and what it says about immigration and immigrants.

At the end of this unit, students will see that immigrants come from all over the world in various circumstances. At the end of this unit, I expect that students who are immigrants will feel less alone. I want everyone in my class to feel like they belong and have a home there. My intention of this Unit of Study is not to change someone’s political view of immigration, but to better understand them and see them as people rather than pests. I understand that what I am trying to do will bring out political tensions for those who are anti-immigrants, but the purpose is not about politics. It’s to recognize that immigration has had a massive impact on American culture in the last 230 plus that immigration stereotypes do more than simply exist. They affect people's lives and well-being.

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