



Theme: Borders and bridges - Migration

Section 2: Experiencing migration – a person at the heart of every story

Too often the real stories of migrants are hidden behind maps, graphs and data. We rarely get to hear their voices, their experiences. We have to keep in mind at all times that we are talking about people and not only statistics.

Warning: Note that this unit contains links to websites such as YouTube. Content on external sites is subject to change and should be monitored to ensure suitability for students.

Learning Outcomes of this Section

Your students will be able to:

- realise that statistics and numbers only tell a part of the story of migration
- understand that migrants are faced with many challenges in adapting to new places and new ways of life
- relate to how historical accounts can offer insights into present-day migration experiences

Resources provided

Resource 6	Migrant letters
Resource 7	Map of 19 th century European migration routes
Resource 8	Poems, songs, artwork
Resource 9	The 'in-betweeners'
Resource 10	Comic Strip Template
Resource 11	The Nansen Passport

Class Activity 1: Statistics alone cannot convey the human stories of migration



Source: International Organization for Migration (IOM), © Statista



HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

The following film clips address the issue of 21st century migration in Europe but have been produced from very different perspectives.

After watching both clips with your students, discuss the following as a group:

- How does the presentation of information about migrants differ in each film clip?
- What kinds of information have your students identified in each film clip?



Film clip: Statistics on migrants

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uDszXcSCbPo>

Source: *BBC News*



Film clip: The story of two Syrian brothers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGeKiWVkey4>

Source: *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*



Group Activity 1: Testimonies from the Past

In the same way as we learn from present-day migrant stories, we can also learn a lot about how Europeans experienced migration in the past from the accounts they left behind, in letters, diaries or other similar primary sources, of their attempts to find peace, security and a better life elsewhere. Break your class into 4-5 groups of roughly equal size. Appoint a note-taker in each group to record the group's opinions and provide feedback at the end of the exercise. Distribute Resource 6 to your students, allocating a letter to each group. These letters from European migrants to the USA cast light on the very human stories at the heart of migration.

- What are the main topics/concerns of each of these letters, as described by those who wrote them?
- What impressions do these letters give about life as a migrant in the late 19th and early 20th centuries?
- Can you identify any similarities and differences between the experiences of these migrants and those of today?

Group Activity 2: Writing Home

For this activity your students must imagine that they are one of the authors of the letters. Get your students to locate the European home country of their selected author on a map. Once they have identified the country get them to undertake some self-directed study into what life conditions were like in that country at the end of the 19th century. Then using Resource 7 ask them to plot their journey to the USA. They should then write a letter imagining they are sending it to family or friends back home in Europe. It should include information such as:

- Why they decided to leave their home country for the USA?
- How they travelled (routes and methods of transport) and what obstacles they faced along the way?
- What was the experience of arriving in a new country?

Group Activity 3: Expressing migration

Through the ages people have expressed their experiences and feelings of movement and displacement through poetry, art and songs. These creative forms give the migrant a voice that can symbolise the situation of an individual or a whole community of people.

Distribute Resource 8 to your students. Following an analysis of the material ask your students to either:

Use the supplied cartoon-strip template (Resource 10) to create a migrant's story based on incidents within the poem 'Be good, little migrants' by Uyen Loewald.

OR

Create their own artistic response from the standpoint of a migrant, i.e. write a poem, create song-lyrics or undertake a drawing/painting/pictogram.

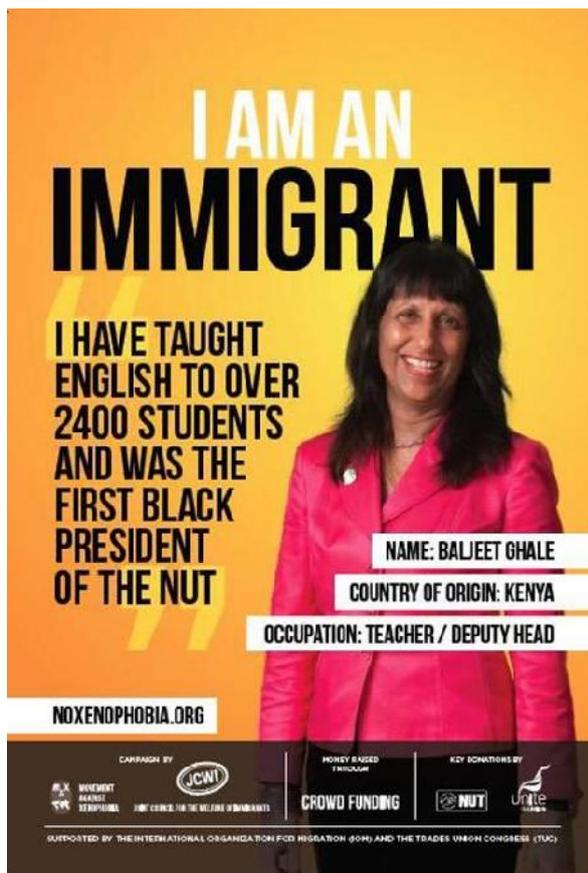


Class Activity 2: Being an “In-betweener”

Moving to a new continent or country involves getting used to new ways of living, new cultures, new civic regulations and, perhaps most importantly, new people. Ask your students to read the biographies and quotes in Resource 9 and as a group discuss how migrants’ sense of themselves and who they are changes in different places and contexts. Notice in particular how the people in their quotes talk about a sense of being ‘in-between’ – a process of adapting to different cultures. Use such a concept with your students to explore the following:

- The importance of recognising that people can be from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Do any of your students identify with this?
- What kinds of challenges might make such adaption difficult i.e. racism, lack of awareness of diversity by the public at large etc.?

It is important to stress to students that migrants also have success stories in spite of the difficulties they face, with many becoming highly skilled and respected professionals in their chosen fields of work and activity. Try to discover similar examples in your country, as represented in the following poster.



Source: Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants www.icwi.org.uk



HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY

To explore what life can be like for migrants in European countries who have no official citizenship status, see www.undocumentary.org and watch the following short film to hear from the children of such migrants, the so-called *sans papiers*.



Laissez-les grandir ici

<http://www.dailymotion.com/video/k37ZBrDgWk5oHj9Ety>

The lack of official documentation and associated rights for refugees and stateless people is not only a modern day problem, it has historic precedent. Wars and conflict throughout the 20th and 21st centuries have forced millions to flee their homes and become displaced. Distribute to your students Resource 11, which outlines an example from the years after World War I, in which an attempt was made to assist refugees and displaced people.