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ABSTRACT

Noting that Alice in Wonderland's journey is not unlike the experience of an immigrant who relocates to a new country, this lesson plan uses passages from "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," along with various history texts, class discussions of students' experiences, and primary source documents and images from the American Memory collections, to help students uncover the common themes of the immigrant experience. This 6-activity lesson plan for 6th through 8th grades is applicable for American History, Language Arts, and English as a Second Language. Through the lesson, students will be able to: understand common themes of the immigrant experience, such as pushes and pulls, encountering differences, and assimilation; identify the common themes of the immigrant experience in a primary source oral history or narrative; draw conclusions about the themes of the immigrant experience by analyzing primary source photographs; and reinforce and extend understanding of the immigrant experience by creating a primary source photographic exhibit. (PM)

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Down the Rabbit Hole.

By

Mary Johnson and Linda Thompson

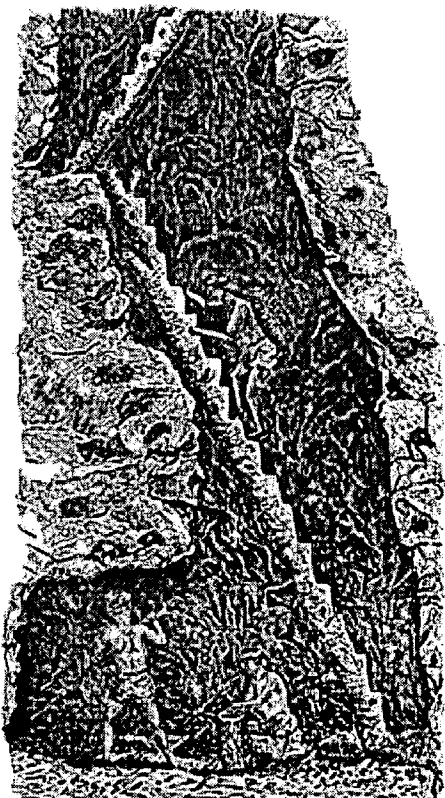
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# Down the Rabbit Hole

By  
Mary Johnson  
and Linda Thompson

American Memory Fellows 2000

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Down The Rabbit Hole

## Overview

*Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and fortunately was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge. In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again. ~ Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

When Alice fell down the rabbit hole, she found herself in a world where the rules had changed, her surroundings were unfamiliar, and the inhabitants spoke in strange tongues. Alice's journey is not unlike the experience of an immigrant who relocates to a new country. Using passages from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, along with various history texts, class discussions of students' experiences, and primary source documents and images from the American Memory collections, students uncover the common themes of the immigrant experience.

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### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- understand common themes of the immigrant experience, such as pushes and pulls, encountering differences, and assimilation;
- identify the common themes of the immigrant experience in a primary source oral history or narrative;
- draw conclusions about the themes of the immigrant experience by analyzing primary source photographs; and
- reinforce and extend understanding of the immigrant experience by creating a primary source photographic exhibit.

### Time Required

Two weeks.

### Recommended Grade Level

Grades 6-8.

### Curriculum Fit

American History, Language Arts, and English as a Second Language.

### Resources Used

- [Alice's Adventures in Wonderland](#) from Carnegie Mellon University's Web site
- [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940](#)
- [Pioneering the Upper Midwest: Books from Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, ca. 1820-1910](#)
- [Touring Turn-of-the-Century America: Photographs from the Detroit Publishing Company, 1880-1920](#)

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## **Teacher's Guide**

### **Procedure**

#### Activity One: Making the Literary Connection to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

*As a lead-in activity, read portions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which promote discussions related to immigration.*

#### Activity Two: Discovering the Common Themes of the Immigrant Experience - Connecting to Personal Experience

*Students brainstorm the common threads of the immigrant experience and relate this experience to their own experiences with relocation and adjustment to new surroundings.*

#### Activity Three: Analyzing Primary Source Texts to Identify Common Themes of the Immigrant Experience

*Students use teacher-selected primary sources to identify the common themes of the immigrant experience.*

#### Activity Four: Introduction to Photographic Analysis

*Students combine observations with background knowledge to make deductions about photographs related to the theme of immigration.*

*(Note: This activity can use any theme that fits into the curriculum.)*

#### Activity Five: Curating a Photo Exhibit of "The Immigrant Experience"

*Students become curators of a photo exhibit entitled "The Immigrant Experience."*

#### Activity Six: Grand Opening of "The Immigrant Experience"

*Students combine their posters to create a poster display for parents and community members.*

### **Evaluation**

The Immigrant Experience - A Photographic Exhibit Five-Point Assessment Rubric.

(Requires: Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0)

An excellent way to establish the concept of a primary source is to ask the students to explore their homes for artifacts that tell a story about their own families. We invite you to link to our "My Family Artifact" unit within the Units of Practice Database found in [The Missing Piece](#) grant site. Do a keyword search on [My Family Artifact](#) to link to the unit. ("The Missing Piece" is a three-year technology staff development grant funded for Academy School District #20 in Colorado Springs, Colorado.)

Based on our American Memory experiences, this unit, as well as any lesson that uses primary source materials, can be used with multiple grade levels as an introduction to the "Down the Rabbit Hole" lesson .

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## Activity One

### Making the Literary Connection to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

As a lead-in activity, read portions of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to the students for a few minutes every day. The links below take you to an online version of the book on Carnegie Mellon University's Web site.

Although there are many themes for discussion, for the purposes of this unit, highlight scenes that relate to the discomfort experienced by Alice because of the unpredictability of her experiences in Wonderland.

The four following scenes can be highlighted for introductory discussions about the immigrant experience:

#### Chapter IV: The Rabbit Sends In a Little Bill

"It was much pleasanter at home," thought poor Alice, "when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits. I almost wish I hadn't gone down that rabbit-hole – and yet – it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life! I do wonder what can have happened to me! When I used to read fairy tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one!"

#### Chapter V: Advice from a Caterpillar

The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence: at last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.

"Who are You?" said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, "I – I hardly know, Sir, just at present – at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."

#### Chapter VI: Pig and Pepper

"Cheshire Puss," she began, rather timidly, as she did not at all know whether it would like the name: however, it only grinned a little wider. "Come, it's pleased so far," thought Alice, and she went on. "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where – " said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

" – so long as I get somewhere," Alice added as an explanation.

"Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."

Alice felt that this could not be denied, so she tried another question. "What sort of people live about here?"

"In that direction," the Cat said, waving its right paw round, "lives a Hatter: and in that direction," waving the other paw, "lives a March Hare. Visit either you like: they're both mad."

"But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.

"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."

"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.

"You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."

### Chapter VIII: The Queen's Croquet-Ground

"I don't think they play at all fairly," Alice began, in rather a complaining tone, "and they all quarrel so dreadfully one can't hear oneself speak – and they don't seem to have any rules in particular: at least, if there are, nobody attends to them – and you've no idea how confusing it is all the things being alive: for instance, there's the arch I've got to go through next walking about at the other end of the ground – and I should have croqueted the Queen's hedgehog just now, only it ran away when it saw mine coming!"

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## **Activity Two**

### **Discovering the Common Themes of the Immigrant Experience - Connecting the Personal Experience**

Students brainstorm the common threads of the immigrant experience. Through a teacher/student discussion of their own relocation experiences (city to city, state to state, or country to country), identify reasons for relocating, difficulties encountered, and the successes or failures of adjustments to new surroundings.

Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

1. Have you ever moved to a new place? If yes, do you remember feeling scared? Unsure? Excited? Angry? Relieved? Sad? Out of place?
2. If you have moved, how did you feel in your new location after three months? Six months? One year? Did you feel as if you would ever fit in? Did you make friends quickly or slowly? What did you miss?
3. Have you ever lived in a country where the people do not speak your language? How did that feel?
4. If you belong to a military family, where have you lived? Have you moved often? Can you describe your experiences? If you have lived in a foreign country, were you scared about moving there? Was the food strange to you?
5. Have you ever known someone from another country who has moved (immigrated) to the United States?
6. Can you think of several possible reasons why a person immigrates to the United States?
7. Did any of your ancestors emigrate from another country? Which country or countries?
8. Do you think that many immigrants to the United States face discrimination? Economic problems? Racial prejudice? Religious differences? Language difficulties? Educational challenges?
9. Do you think that all immigrants should learn English? Should immigrants keep their ties to their ethnic and racial heritage? Do you think that immigrant teenagers have difficulty being part of both the American culture and their own cultures?
10. What percentage of the U.S. population do you think is foreign-born? How could you find the answer?

Through student/teacher inquiry the following common themes of immigration should be identified and defined: motivation to emigrate, assimilation, economic issues (including living and working conditions), education, choice of destination, language difficulties, and issues of prejudice.

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## Activity Three

### Analyzing Primary Source Texts to Identify Common Themes of the Immigrant Experience

Students use teacher-selected primary sources to identify the common themes of the immigrant experience.

1. Divide students into groups.
2. Assign each group to read a primary source oral history or narrative from the American Memory collections as homework. The oral histories listed below work well for a cross-section of immigrant experiences, or you may explore on your own.
3. One student in each group will be selected as the group's discussion leader for the following day.
4. The group will choose an historian to record the group's conclusions. The groups should use the Examining a Primary Source worksheet as a guide. (Requires: Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0)

### Oral Histories

The following oral histories are from American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940:

- Gardenia Banta - Describes the experiences of an African-American woman who moved to New York City in 1888 during the post-Civil War northern migration. She tells of her previous life in Savannah, Georgia, and of the difficulties of moving north after her father died.
- Philip Dash - This Russian Jewish immigrant describes his work in the shoe industry, his union involvement, and living in poverty in Brooklyn, New York.
- Mr. and Mrs. Elias Pederson - Mr. Pederson was born in Wisconsin in 1849, the year after his parents emigrated from Norway. He and his wife recall plowing the fields with oxen, loading heavy railroad ties onto a sleigh, and carrying butter and eggs to nearby Pokerville to exchange for groceries.
- Florence Cravens [I was born in Austin, Texas] - In 1886, Mrs. Cravens moved west with her family from Austin, Texas, on an immigrant train of covered wagons. She recalls hearing wolves, coming upon the newly dug grave of a child, a shooting, selling mesquite roots for firewood, the death of her mother, and a smallpox epidemic.
- Albert Zeigler - A German immigrant, Mr. Zeigler describes running a dry goods store with his brother in New Mexico, selling stove pipe hats to Apache Indians, and the impact of gold

mining on the town in the 1880s.

- Giacomo Coletti - This narrative describes an Italian granite worker's life in Montpelier, Vermont, including the importance of family celebrations, living in poverty, working in "the sheds," and working with other immigrant groups.

The following oral history is from Pioneering the Upper Midwest: Books from Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, ca. 1820-1910:

- Chrysostom Verwyst [Reminiscences of a pioneer missionary] - A pioneer missionary immigrant from Holland, Mr. Verwyst describes his train ride to Hollandtown, Wisconsin, and how his family carved a farm out of the woods and meadows. His memoirs contain accounts of festive celebrations, clothing, agricultural practices, and local community life.

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## Examining a Primary Source

Names of Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Read the assigned primary source document *before* class.
  2. In your group, discuss the main points of the narrative or interview (10 minutes).
  3. As a group, assign a historian to fill in the worksheet below. First, let's review the rules of group work:
    - Students readily share information with others in their group.
    - Students discuss ideas with others in the group, listen well, and change their own ideas when appropriate.
    - Students actively seek the contributions of every member of the group.
    - Students help the group move to consensus.
  4. Hand in the completed worksheet at the end of today's class.
- 

1. This document is a part of which American Memory collection?
2. What is the title of this document? Is there a second title? If so, what is it?
3. What is the name of the "informant" or the interviewer (or, in one case, the author)?
4. What is the date of the interview or account?
5. Who is being interviewed? What do you know about him/her?
6. Look at the "Page image" in the back of your packet. This is the original form of the interview or narrative. What technology was originally used to record it?

7. If the document begins with an interview form, does it provide any additional information to help you understand the source? If so, what? Names? Dates? Places? Description of the interview setting?

8. Write a three-to-five sentence summary of the interview of narrative below.

9. List six vocabulary words from the document:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

10. Write one objective observation of the document.

11. Write one subjective observation of the document.

12. What question or questions do you wish that the narrative had answered but did not answer?

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## **Activity Four**

### **Introduction to Photographic Analysis**

1. Choose a photograph from the [American Memory](#) collections and project it on a screen. [Italian bread peddlers](#), from the [Touring Turn-of-the-Century America: Photographs from the Detroit Publishing Company, 1880-1920](#) collection, works well for this activity.
2. Lead the students through a group [photographic analysis](#) activity, using the questions from the [photographic analysis](#) handout as a guide. (Requires: [Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0](#))
3. Students work in pairs to search for and print a photograph from the [Touring Turn-of-the-Century America: Photographs from the Detroit Publishing Company, 1880 - 1920](#) collection to analyze. Use the [photographic analysis](#) handout as a guide. The worksheet requires them to consider prior knowledge and to write objective and subjective observations as well as deductions about the photo. (Requires: [Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0](#))
4. Photographic analysis may be introduced to the students before the immigration unit begins. For an example, see the [Westward Expansion Photographic Analysis Activity](#). (Requires: [Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0](#)) Alternately, refer to the Learning Page workshop, [Students As Historians](#), for teaching guides on photographic analysis.

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# Photographic Analysis

Names of Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

Select a photograph from the American Memory collection, Touring Turn-of-the-Century America: Photographs from the Detroit Publishing Company, 1880-1920. Search for photographs illustrating the theme of immigration by entering one of the following keywords:

children	school	railroad/railway
families	emigrants	immigrants
Jewish	carriages	market
tenement	street scene	peddler
Italians	Germans	Irish

Select one photograph to analyze. Print one copy of the photograph. Attach the photograph to the questions. Answer the questions below based on your photograph.

1. What is the title/caption of the photograph?
2. List two Library of Congress subject headings for the photograph.
3. What is the setting for the photograph?
4. Write one objective observation about the photograph.
5. Write one subjective observation about the photograph.

6. Whose story do you think is being told and whose story is left untold?
  
7. Do the clothing, the background, or any other elements of the photograph provide any clues about the photograph? Explain.
  
8. When and where in the past do you think that the photograph was taken? How can you tell?
  
9. If you had been the photographer, why would you have taken this photograph?
  
10. Does the photograph appear to be staged? If there are people in the photograph, are they posed?
  
11. Why did you choose this photograph?
  
12. What questions would you still like to have answered about this photograph? Is it possible to answer the remaining questions? How?



# Westward Expansion Photographic Analysis Activity

Names of Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

In this activity, you will select each American Memory photograph collection that might contain photographs illustrating the themes of Westward Expansion. You will search the collections by entering one of the following keywords:

Indians	education	schools
Oregon Trail	plains life	farming
ranching	mining	cattle drives
railroad	gold rush	Pony Express
army	cavalry	forts
sod houses	pioneers	covered wagons
women	children	transportation
exploration	western art	Mormons

Select a photograph to analyze. Print one copy of the photograph. Attach the photograph to the questions. Write your names at the top right of the photograph. Answer the questions below based on your photograph.

1. What is the title of the photograph?
2. List two Library of Congress subject headings for the photograph.
3. In what American Memory collection is the photograph located?
4. Whose story do you think is being told and whose story is left untold?
5. What is the setting for the photograph?

6. Write one objective observation about the photograph.
  
7. Write one subjective observation about the photograph.
  
8. Do the clothing, the background, or any other elements of the photograph provide any clues about the photograph? Explain.
  
9. When and where in the past do you think that the photograph was taken? How can you tell?
  
10. If you had been the photographer, why would you have taken this photograph?
  
11. Does the photograph appear to be staged? If there are people in the photograph, are they posed?
  
12. Why did you choose this photograph?
  
13. What questions would you still like to have answered about this photograph? Is it possible to answer the remaining questions? How?

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## STUDENTS AS HISTORIANS

### Exercises for the Elementary and Middle School Student

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**Overview** | [Exercise](#) | [Facilitator Framework](#)

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### Overview

American Memory-based activities for students in the late elementary and middle school grades need much structure and guidance. Using photograph collections focused on the Civil War and African Americans, we'll identify ways that students can use elements of these collections as a basis for historical investigation.

### Objectives

At the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of different searching strategies that are appropriate to elementary and middle school students;
- identify ways students can use elements from different American Memory collections as a basis for historical investigation;
- determine how images can tell the story of the American experience.

### Tasks in brief

In this workshop, participants will:

- collaborate on the best ways to search American Memory collections with elementary and middle school students;
- learn strategies for incorporating American Memory collections into different types of learning experiences ranging from one-day lessons to long-term projects;
- analyze photographs for historical context;
- determine how students can use visuals to interpret the experiences of different Americans.

### Resources

- A. American Memory Collections:
  - [Selected Civil War Photographs, 1861-1865](#)
  - [African-American Odyssey](#)
  - Others as selected by workshop participants
- B. Handouts:
  - [Vocabulary Development Activity](#)
  - [Photograph Analysis Guide](#)
  - [African-American Odyssey Activity](#)

C. Printouts of Selected Civil War Photographs, 1861-1865:

- o [James River, Va. Sailors on deck of U.S.S. Monitor; cookstove at left](#)
- o [Gettysburg, Pa. Dead Confederate soldiers in "the devil's den"](#)
- o [Cumberland Landing, Va. Group of "contrabands" at Foller's house](#)
- o [Keedysville, Md., vicinity. Confederate wounded at Smith's Barn, with Dr. Anson Hurd, 14th Indiana Volunteers, in attendance](#)

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## **Activity Five**

### **Curating a Photo Exhibit of "The Immigrant Experience"**

Students become curators of a photo exhibit entitled "The Immigrant Experience."

1. Hand out copies of [The Immigrant Experience - A Photographic Exhibit](#) instruction sheet and review with students. (Requires: [Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0](#))
2. Students choose an immigration-related theme to research.
3. In pairs, students search the [American Memory](#) collections and select and print five photographs depicting their immigration theme.
4. Each of the photographs should be accompanied by text that explains the photo's relationship to the chosen theme.
5. Students research their chosen theme and explain it in a written essay.
6. As a guide, the students complete an [Examining a Primary Source](#) worksheet used in [Activity Four](#) for each of the five selected photographs. (Requires: [Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0](#))
7. The projects can be assessed using [The Immigrant Experience - A Photographic Exhibit Assessment Rubric](#). (Requires: [Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0](#))

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## **Activity Six**

### **Grand Opening of "The Immigrant Experience"**

Students combine their posters to create a poster display on a classroom wall. At the exhibit opening, students view all the displayed photos to reinforce their understanding of the various themes of immigration. If possible, display selected posters at a school "technology night" or other event, where students can explain the project to visiting parents and community members.

After the exhibit opening, guide a wrap-up discussion of the immigrant experience.

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# The Immigrant Experience – A Photographic Exhibit

Names of Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

To culminate the American Memory Photographic Analysis Unit, become curators of your own photographic exhibit of “The Immigrant Experience.” Rules for this competitive exhibition are as follows:

1. Work in pairs
2. Select a theme from the immigrant experience and search for five photographs in the American Memory collections that illustrate that theme.
3. Write a one-paragraph essay (word-processed) for each photograph explaining how the photograph illustrates the theme and adding interesting observations about the photograph based on photographic analysis and research.
4. Under each photograph, state the source, name of the photograph, and name of the collection. At least two of the photographs must come from American Memory.
5. Write a two-paragraph essay (word-processed) describing the overall theme of the poster based on research.
6. Display the selected photographs and explanations on a 20 X 30 inch poster board. Title: “The Immigrant Experience: Your Theme.”
7. Place (tape or glue) a word-processed bibliography of the five photographs on the back of the poster board.
8. Design a layout, which will be judged on both content and artistic merit.
9. Due Date:

To help you develop quality content for the paragraphs that accompany your selected photographs, complete a basic analysis of each photograph using the questions below:

1. What is the immigration theme that you have chosen to illustrate?
2. How does the photograph fit your chosen immigration theme?
3. What is the subject of the photograph?
4. What is the setting for the photograph?

5. What other details did you observe?
  
6. What is the name of the photographer?
  
7. Write one objective observation about the photograph.
  
8. Write one subjective observation about the photograph.
  
9. When and where in the past do you think that the photograph was taken? How can you tell?
  
10. How would you describe the photographer's point of view or reason for taking the photograph?
  
11. Do the clothing, the background, or any other elements of the photograph provide any clues about the photograph?
  
12. Does the photograph appear to be staged? If there are people in the photograph, are they posed?
  
13. Does the bibliographic citation give any additional clues?



# Scoring Rubric for Photographic Exhibits

Names of Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

5- Exhibit is very appropriate for the theme of immigration and intelligence and communicates superior knowledge of topic. Exhibit is very clearly presented with high quality and shows much creativity.

4- Exhibit is appropriate for the theme of immigration and intelligence and communicates strong knowledge of topic. Exhibit is clearly presented, shows quality and creativity, but may not be up to superior standards.

3- Exhibit displays the theme of immigration and intelligence, but is not completely appropriate. Communicates some knowledge of the topic, but may not be completely clear or show high quality and/or creativity.

2- Exhibit is not appropriate for the theme of immigration and/or intelligence and may be incomplete. Communicates little knowledge of topic. Unclear and/or poor quality or shows little creativity. Below average standards.

1- Exhibit is not completed or inappropriate for the theme of immigration. Shows no knowledge of topic and/or no creativity. Quality is very poor and reflects little or no effort.

0- Exhibit not submitted.

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## **Activity Six**

### **Grand Opening of "The Immigrant Experience"**

Students combine their posters to create a poster display on a classroom wall. At the exhibit opening, students view all the displayed photos to reinforce their understanding of the various themes of immigration. If possible, display selected posters at a school "technology night" or other event, where students can explain the project to visiting parents and community members.

After the exhibit opening, guide a wrap-up discussion of the immigrant experience.

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