

TEACHER'S GUIDE

WITH STANDARDS-BASED LESSONS GRADES 6 AND UP

INJUSTICE ON OUR PLATES

Immigrant Women in the U.S. Food Industry



TEACHING
TOLERANCE



A PROJECT OF THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER
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PHOTOGRAPHY BY ARMANDO BELLÍAS, TODD BIGELOW, NATASHA CUEVAS
COVER PHOTOGRAPHY BY: TODD BIGELOW, NATASHA CUEVAS

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Introduction

What are your students eating for lunch today? Whatever they choose—chicken, burger, salad or a piece of fruit—it’s more than likely that it was produced by the labor of an undocumented worker. Of all the farmworkers and other food producers in America, at least six in 10 are undocumented. They’re the backbone of our food supply and contribute to our economy. Many of them are women.

Based on interviews with 150 of those women—from Mexico, Guatemala and other Latin American countries—the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has written a report that puts faces on and brings facts to the conversation about immigration. *Injustice on Our Plates: Immigrant Women in the U.S. Food Industry* asks and answers important questions: What is our immigration policy? How well does it match the needs of American food producers? How are the lives of these workers and their families affected by immigration policy and the conditions under which they labor? Do Americans benefit from the labor of these women, and are they being treated fairly?

This teaching guide, produced by the SPLC’s Teaching Tolerance program, provides educators with lessons and materials based on the information in the report. The materials advocate neither a pro- or anti-immigrant stance. Rather, they encourage students to focus on the facts surrounding immigration, learn from the voices of the women themselves and consider whether basic human rights are dependent on legal status.

How to Use This Resource

This educational resource is divided into seven themes that reflect the content of the SPLC report. The lesson for each theme includes the following:

- An overview of the theme
- Student objectives
- Essential questions
- A glossary
- A main, multi-step activity appropriate for work in pairs, small groups and as a class
- An optional activity, “In Their Own Words,” that takes advantage of the report’s primary sources
- An extension activity, “Past to Present,” that helps students apply chronological thinking to the issue
- Readings, graphic organizers and other handouts

The themes are presented chronologically: Lesson content moves from encouraging students to recognize both facts and myths about undocumented workers to making a difference in their own communities and states. But the themes do not need to be taught in order. And, each theme is designed as a standalone unit if that’s what best fits your curriculum needs.

Collectively, the lessons are best used in middle and high school (6-12) social studies and language arts classrooms—with specific applications for civics, geography, economics, history, literature, reading and writing. Theme 5 is also applicable to health and science.

Although this free resource is based on the content of *Injustice on Our Plates*, you need not

download the report for students. Readings and other materials from the report have been reproduced within the relevant themes. But you may want to review the entire report yourself before teaching the content. You can find the full report in PDF form at www.splcenter.org. Click “Get Informed,” then “publications” and choose “Injustice on Our Plates.”

Professional Development

Educators may hesitate to use these lessons, either because they are reluctant to teach about controversial current events or struggle to find time for topics not specifically identified in the mandated curriculum. You will find, however, that neither concern needs to limit your use of these lessons.

Controversy: The lessons that accompany *Injustice on Our Plates* do not take a stand, or ask you or your students to take a stand, on illegal immigration or policies that affect it. To be sure, the lessons contain the words of women who work in this country illegally. Thus they provide a balance that is usually missing from news reports. The information in these lessons—and the work that students do with that information—complements and enlarges these other sources. With more perspectives, students are more fully informed and better able to take considered positions on issues.

Curriculum: These lessons can be used to teach topics you already plan to teach. Here are a few examples:

Lesson 2, “The Economics of Risk,” has students conducting informal cost-benefit analyses to better understand how women decide whether to risk the journey to the United States. You can use this lesson as a case study to teach students about economic decision-making.

Lesson 3, “The Motivations for Movement,” has students using a geographer’s lens to explore why women leave their home countries and come to the United States without proper documentation. You can use this lesson as a case study to teach students about push-pull factors that lead people to move.

Lesson 4, “Family Ties,” has students analyze how media reports about undocumented workers shape their perceptions. You can use this lesson as a case study to teach students how to analyze the mass media to uncover the attitudes and assumptions that shape the information we get as media consumers, and to think about how that information shapes our understanding of important human and policy issues.

Lesson 5, “Paying With Their Health,” has students use Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle* to compare today’s immigrant workers with those from the past. You can use this lesson as a way to connect past and present, to use literature to teach history, and to help students see the relevance of historical fiction to current conditions.

All the lessons include a segment called “Past to Present,” which you can easily integrate into history lessons. The past-to-present topics include: the history of immigration laws; the history of American labor laws; the history of American border policy; and the history of American migrant farmworkers. Any of these segments would work well in a U.S. history class.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Guatemala: In the Shadow of the Raid is a 16-minute PBS Frontline documentary on the effects of a May 2008 immigration raid in Postville, Iowa. www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGdvv4dwzIA

The Immigration Policy Center is the research and policy arm of the American Immigration Council. It contributes research to policy-makers, the media and the general public on issues related to immigration—such as its impact on the economy, jobs and crime. It offers a fact sheet on the Dream Act. www.immigrationpolicy.org

The Migration Policy Institute is a nonpartisan think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people around the world. www.migrationpolicy.org

The National Immigration Law Center defends and advances the rights of low-income immigrants and their family members. www.nilc.org

The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights is a coalition of groups that share information and analysis on important immigrant and refugee issues. www.nnirr.org

The U.S. Department of Justice Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices enforces anti-discrimination laws as they apply to immigrant laborers. www.justice.gov/crt/about/osc

NOTE Be sure that students choose objective sources for any research on immigration policy and legislation. Many, including The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and the Center for Immigration Studies, include biases.

Standards

Activities and the embedded assessments address the following standards (McREL 4th Edition)

STANDARD	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6	Theme 7
BEHAVIORAL STUDIES							
Standard 4. Understands conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among individuals, groups, and institutions		•	•			•	•
CIVICS							
Standard 3. Understands the sources, purposes, and functions of law, and the importance of the rule of law for the protection of individual rights and the common good	•			•	•		
Standard 11. Understands the role of diversity in American life and the importance of shared values, political beliefs, and civic beliefs in an increasingly diverse American society			•				
Standard 13. Understands the character of American political and social conflict and factors that tend to prevent or lower its intensity		•	•				•
Standard 14. Understands issues concerning the disparities between ideals and reality in American political and social life	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Standard 18. Understands the role and importance of law in the American constitutional system and issues regarding the judicial protection of individual rights		•					•
Standard 21. Understands the formation and implementation of public policy			•				
Standard 23. Understands the impact of significant political and nonpolitical developments on the United States and other nations			•				
Standard 24. Understands the meaning of citizenship in the United States, and knows the requirements for citizenship and naturalization	•		•	•	•		
Standard 25. Understands issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights	•	•		•	•		•
ECONOMICS							
Standard 1. Understands that scarcity of productive resources requires choices that generate opportunity costs	•	•		•	•		
Standard 3. Understands the concept of prices and the interaction of supply and demand in a market economy	•				•		
Standard 5. Understands unemployment, income, and income distribution in a market economy						•	

STANDARD	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6	Theme 7
GEOGRAPHY							
Standard 6. Understands that culture and experience influence people’s perceptions of places and regions	•		•		•		
Standard 9. Understands the nature, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth’s surface	•		•	•	•		
Standard 11. Understands the patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth’s surface	•		•	•	•		
Standard 12. Understands the patterns of human settlement and their causes	•		•	•	•	•	
HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING							
Standard 1. Understands and knows how to analyze chronological relationships and patterns		•					•
Standard 2. Understands the historical perspective		•					•
LANGUAGE ARTS							
Standard 1. Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process	•	•			•		
Standard 2. Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing		•					
Standard 3. Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions		•	•			•	•
Standard 4. Gathers and uses information for research purposes	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Standard 7. Uses skills and strategies to read a variety of informational texts	•		•	•	•		
Standard 8. Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes	•			•	•		
Standard 9. Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media				•			
U.S. HISTORY							
Standard 17. Understands massive immigration after 1870 and how new social patterns, conflicts, and ideas of national unity developed amid growing cultural diversity			•				
Standard 18. Understands the rise of the American labor movement and how political issues reflected social and economic changes		•					
Standard 28. Understands domestic policies in the post-World War II period			•			•	
Standard 31. Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

STANDARD	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6	Theme 7
TECHNOLOGY Standard 2. Knows the characteristics and uses of computer software programs	•			•	•		
VISUAL ARTS Standard 1. Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts				•			
WORKING WITH OTHERS Standard 1. Contributes to the overall effort of a group	•			•	•		
Standard 4. Displays effective interpersonal communication skills	•			•	•		

THEME 1

Recognizing the Undocumented

Overview

Theme 1, Recognizing the Undocumented, will help students put faces and voices to women whose labor is an important part of our nation's economy, but who remain in the shadows. The activities encourage students to examine: (1) the industries in their communities that may depend on undocumented workers; (2) the facts concerning the workers' status and options for legal residence; (3) the conditions that many of them work under, told in their own words; and (4) the history of legislation that would recognize and reward their contributions.

This lesson features activities that will make students aware of the roles that undocumented immigrants play in the harvest and processing of food and other necessary products, help them understand the status of and choices that face undocumented workers in our country, and appreciate the importance of human rights.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the industries in their own communities and regions that may hire undocumented workers
- Understand the roles those workers play in the American economy
- Comprehend the circumstances under which many of these people work
- Separate facts from the myths that cling to the issue of undocumented workers
- Track legislation related to this issue over the past 50 years

Essential Questions

- What is the role of undocumented workers in our society?
- What are the obstacles that keep them from legal status?
- What are the circumstances under which they work?
- What is the government doing about this issue?

Glossary

“anchor baby” [ank-uhr bay-bee]

(*noun*) crude term for a child born in the United States to undocumented parents; some claim the child's role is to make immigration and permanent residency easier for those parents

asylum [uh-sahy-luhm]

(*noun*) a temporary refuge that is granted to a political offender; the person is referred to as an asylee [uh-sahy-lee]

diversity visa [dih-vuhr-si-tee vee-suh]

(*noun*) a “green card” lottery that is run by the State Department for people from underrepresented regions in the United States



employer petition [ehm-ploy-uhr puh-tih-shun]

(*noun*) a form filed by an employer wishing to hire a foreign national to work in the United States on a permanent basis

permanent residency [puhr-muh-nent reh-zuh-duhn-see]

(*noun*) a visa status that allows a person to live indefinitely in the United States, regardless of his or her citizenship

provision [pruh-vizh-uhn]

(*noun*) a clause in a legal document

undocumented [uhn-dock-yuh-men-tid]

(*adjective*) lacking proper immigration or working papers

Materials

Reading: *The Blocked Path*

Reading: *Sara*

Separating Fact From Myth

1. In the SPLC report *Injustice on Our Plates*, the undocumented workers interviewed often describe themselves as “invisible.” But they serve a very important role in almost every community. Brainstorm the industries that predominate in your community or region. Is it heavily agricultural, with large farms that grow, harvest, and ship fruits and vegetables? Does it include beef, pork or chicken processing facilities? Is it a growth area, with lots of construction and a need for manual laborers? Are there large garment manufacturers in your community or region? What service industries benefit the population? As you brainstorm, create a profile of the economic engines that drive your region. What role do you think undocumented workers might play in your community’s economy?

2. Many Americans are not well-informed about what drives workers from Mexico and many Latin American nations to the United States, and what forces often block them from receiving legal status. As a class, you will investigate the four major ways that—under our current system—people can obtain lawful permanent residency. Divide your class into four working groups, with each choosing one of the following:

- A family relationship with a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident
- An employer petition for lawful permanent residency
- Refugee or asylee status
- A diversity visa, commonly known as “the lottery”

3. Using *The Blocked Path* and other resources—either in print or online—research your group’s chosen path to legal residency. Choose your resources wisely so that you can present facts, rather than myths or political talking points.

4. Within your group, share what you’ve learned in one of the following ways: Present a conversation between two people, write an FAQ (frequently asked questions) for a classroom wiki on the issue, create a rap song that incorporates the information, or write a one-act play that dramatizes the choice and its consequences.

5. As a class, share what was learned from each of the groups. What does this exercise tell you about the current status of undocumented workers? What does it tell you about what could be done?

In Their Own Words

1. The reading *Sara* features a profile of “Sara,” who left Mexico a decade ago for what she thought would be a better life in the United States. In pairs or small groups, read the profile.
2. As you read, highlight all of the adjectives. An adjective is a word that describes, changes or adds to the meaning of a noun. As an example, the first paragraph refers to Sara’s “youthful urge to travel.” In this case, “youthful” is the adjective. Check your work with others in the group.
3. Within your group, make a list of the adjectives you’ve highlighted. Discuss: What story do the words tell? Does that story sound like one that should happen in modern-day America? Why or why not? Share your reactions. (*Note: Highlighted words should include: youthful, pretty, richer, hard, poor, free, difficult, barbed, uncaring, physical, abusive, cruel, fast, butchered, sharp, scratched, dull, scorching, near-freezing, extreme, bad, battered, crowded, swollen, challenging, cold, dangerous, fast-moving, unrelenting, impossible, gnarled, rusty and self-perpetuating.*)
4. Sara’s profile ends with her statement: “You suffer to come. Then once you’re here, you suffer some more.” On your own, write a journal entry that reflects on her statement. What is your reaction to her story? What outcome do you imagine for her? What outcome would you wish for her? Make use of strong adjectives to convey your feelings and opinions.

Past to Present

1. In 1960, CBS broadcast a documentary called “Harvest of Shame.” Narrated by journalist Edward R. Murrow, the program highlighted the plight of migrant agricultural workers in America. In his closing words, Murrow said:

“The migrants have no lobby. Only an enlightened, aroused and perhaps angered public opinion can do anything about the migrants. The people you have seen have the strength to harvest your fruit and vegetables. They do not have the strength to influence legislation.”

Using print or online sources, research the following: When did the program air? Why was that particular day chosen? What spurred the report? What was the reaction of viewers? As a class, discuss your findings.

2. Break into five groups. Within each of your groups and using print or online resources, research the legislation and policy related to immigration, and specifically to low-skilled laborers (e.g., undocumented workers) in one of the following decades:

- 1960 to 1970
- 1970 to 1980
- 1980 to 1990
- 1990 to 2000
- 2000 to 2010

(*Note: Be sure that students choose objective sources for their research on immigration policy and legislation. Many, including the Center for Immigration Studies, include biases.*)

The following online resources are a good start for your research:

PBS Frontline U.S. Immigration Policy Timeline

www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/stories/mexico704/history/timeline.html

The Flow of History Immigration Timeline

www.flowofhistory.org/themes/movement_settlement/uspolicytimeline.php

In your group, record the name of the legislation, the year in which it was introduced and passed, what it was meant to accomplish and its current status.

3. As a class, share the research of each group. Then construct a classroom timeline of the 50-year period that shows each piece of legislation in chronological order. The timeline may take the form of the Rio Grande, an assembly line or other thematic graphic. It can also be displayed as a print timeline or computer-generated timeline that becomes part of your wiki on the issue.

4. As a class, discuss what your timeline shows. In the past 50 years, has there been progress in bettering the daily lives of undocumented workers? Has U.S. immigration policy been able to supply the labor needed by employers? What progress has been made in carving legitimate paths to citizenship?

READING

The Blocked Path

When discussing undocumented immigrants, the question often arises, “Why don’t they just get in line and enter the U.S. legally?”

The answer is that for most of the women interviewed for this report—and for the vast majority of undocumented immigrants in the United States—there simply is no gateway to obtaining legal residence.

Immigration law is enormously complex, with dozens of potential statuses. There are four major ways under our current system that people can obtain a green card for lawful permanent residency:

- A specified family relationship with a U.S. citizen or legal permanent resident.
- An employer petition for lawful permanent residency.
- Adjustment from refugee or asylee status.
- Obtaining a diversity visa, a process commonly known as “the lottery.”

For a number of reasons, none of these mechanisms for legalizing status are available to most undocumented immigrants in the United States.

Family Relationships and the “Anchor Baby” Myth

The so-called “anchor baby” myth is just that—a myth. Children born in the United States to undocumented parents cannot petition for the permanent residency of their parents until age 21. The notion that families might have babies to facilitate their lawful migration 21 years later is not supported by any data. In fact, absent changes to U.S. law, the parents would likely be ineligible to migrate to the United States.

The other family relationships specified as a path to lawful permanent residency include spouses, parents and siblings. The process of gaining residency status through a family relationship can take longer than 20 years. Some of these family relationship categories are so backlogged with immigrants seeking legal permanent resident status that federal officials have declared those categories unavailable.

Immigrants who don’t have these relationships will find that this path to citizenship is simply unavailable. Even immigrants with these relationships often discover the path is practically unavailable.

Employer Petition

Employment-based visas are not available to most low-income workers, even for the most exemplary employees. Of the more than 1 million legal permanent resident visas given out each year, only 10,000 are allocated for workers who are not highly educated or trained. There are so many individuals waiting for these visas, the category has been designated as unavailable by immigration officials.

Refugee/Asylee Status

Refugee or asylee status is a rare commodity for Mexican or Central American residents. Few people from these areas have been granted either status in recent years. In order to qualify, individuals must face a “well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.” Asylum is not an option for those seeking to escape crushing poverty.

“The Lottery”

The odds are long in the diversity visa “lottery.” In this lottery, about 50,000 visas are awarded each year to eligible individuals. Last year, more than 6 million people from around the world applied. Individuals from Mexico and most Central American countries are flatly ineligible for these visas because they are reserved for countries with small numbers of immigrants to the United States.

A Painful Choice

Even for people otherwise eligible to become permanent residents—such as those married to a U.S. citizen—recent changes to immigration law make it impossible for many of them to adjust their status.

From 1994 until 2001, Section 245(i) of the Immigration and Nationality Act allowed certain individuals who were otherwise eligible for immigrant visas, but entered the United States without inspection or fell out of lawful status, to become lawful permanent residents without traveling to a U.S. consulate outside the country to obtain this status.

Section 245(i) grew in significance after 1996, when Congress enacted a law with a provision known as the “3 and 10 year bars.” Under this provision, an immigrant who is unlawfully in the United States for more than 180 days and then leaves the country is barred from re-entry for three or 10 years. The length of the re-entry ban depends on the length of the illegal stay.

Because of more recent changes to immigration law, however, countless people who are otherwise eligible to adjust their status—including thousands of people married to U.S. citizens—are subject to that ban.

Many people now face the painful choice of either leaving the country and their family for 10 years for the chance to become a legal permanent resident or remaining in the United States with their family and giving up the hope of ever achieving legal status.

READING

Sara

When Sara entered the United States in her early 20s, her main goal was to find work and help provide for her family back in Mexico. But she also had a youthful urge to travel. “I was really excited about seeing the United States because I heard a lot about how pretty it was,” she says.

A decade later, at 33, Sara wishes she had resisted the allure of her country’s richer neighbor. “Now that I’m here, I see things so differently.” Life in Mexico was hard, she says, but “even though I was poor, I was free.”

The crossing was difficult. She paid \$1,800 for the privilege of nearly losing her life in the Sonoran Desert. The journey began with 18 other immigrants. By the end, after five days in the desert, only a handful remained. “Many people got lost.”

Sara almost didn’t make it. She got tangled in barbed wire, and the group, pushed forward by the uncaring guides, began to leave her behind. At the last possible moment, a stranger turned back to free Sara.

Within a week of arriving in the United States, Sara got a job at a poultry plant in North Carolina. Although prepared to work hard, she was shocked at the physical demands of her new job and the abusive and cruel treatment from the supervisors.

Working on the “disassembly line,” Sara would place skinned, whole chickens onto cones that sped by her. She regularly stood for eight hours at a time, sometimes 10, reaching up to fill the cones. It was hard to keep up.

“You’re at the pace of a machine. I felt like I was going to faint. The line was too fast.”

At other times, she would hang butchered chicken on the sharp points of hangers. “Many times your hands would get scratched with that point because they wouldn’t slow down the line.” On a few occasions, she cut chicken with dull scissors, her hands swelling as she struggled to cut through bone.

Unlike farmworkers who work in scorching heat, poultry workers have to fight near-freezing temperatures meant to preserve the meat.

“It was an extreme cold. You were white with cold. When you entered the area, you wore sweaters and shoes and everything. But it was very bad.”

Every day after her shift, Sara would drag her battered body home to the crowded apartment she shared and curl up on the floor, her body burning with pain.



AP/WIDE WORLD

“One time, I couldn’t close my hands at night because they were so swollen. One day I went to the office and told them I couldn’t take it, that it felt like my bones were going to pop out.”

Her managers dismissed her concerns and sent her back to work.

The challenging environment—cold temperatures and the dangerous industrial surroundings of sharp metal and fast-moving machines—was made worse by the unrelenting demands of the supervisors.

Her managers routinely yelled at and cursed their employees, pushing them to meet impossible production quotas. They denied workers breaks to stretch their gnarled limbs or go to the bathroom.

One supervisor, in his rush to get Sara back to work, broke her wrist, she says. The man noticed her struggling to close a latch on a rusty, metal safety glove. He grabbed her hand and slammed the latch in place.

“He pressed down on the latch and I felt how the bones cracked apart,” she recalls. Her hand went limp with pain, but the supervisor yelled at Sara to get back to work. “I grabbed the chicken and it fell out of my hands because it hurt so much.” She did not report the incident because she did not believe anything could be done.

Sara intended to stay in the United States for just two years but has, instead, stayed a decade. She is caught in the cruelly self-perpetuating situation of being unable to be with her family in Mexico because she feels she has to remain in the United States to help support them.

“You suffer to come. Then once you’re here, you suffer some more.”

THEME 2

The Economics of Risk

Overview

Theme 2, The Economics of Risk, will help students understand that women who enter the United States illegally make a series of difficult decisions, each with potential opportunities and risks. Should they attempt to cross the border with or without their children? Should they complain about the boss's unfair pay practices? Should they look the other way when they're sexually harassed at work? Should they take a job that will help educate their children, but might permanently damage their health?

In these activities, students will imagine themselves in the role of these women and weigh the risks and potential benefits of their actions. In the process, they will develop an understanding of undocumented workers that goes far deeper than the caricatures that are often part of the debate over policy.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify risks and potential benefits that women consider when deciding whether to come to the United States without legal documents, whether to stay and how to respond to difficult circumstances
- Weigh risks and potential benefits and make educated decisions
- Develop empathy for the circumstances of undocumented workers
- Track the history of key labor laws in the United States

Essential Questions

- What difficult choices must women make when deciding whether or not to come to the United States without legal documents?
- How do people make difficult decisions?
- How have labor laws developed over the course of U.S. history? What grassroots efforts have contributed to their development?

Glossary

benefit [beh-nuh-fiht]

(*noun*) something that aids or promotes well-being

exploitation [eks-ploy-tay-shun]

(*noun*) the act of using something in an unjust or cruel manner

harassment [huh-rass-mehnt]

(*noun*) behavior meant to be disturbing or threatening

risk [rihsk]

(*noun*) exposure to the chance of loss or damage



Materials

Reading: *Difficult Decisions*

Handout: Elvira

Handout: Maria

Weighing the Costs

1. This lesson is called “The Economics of Risk.” The word *economics* often refers to money and choices that involve money. But economics can also be used more broadly. In this lesson, we use it to refer to the choices that may not have anything to do with money directly, but that involve other kinds of costs. To warm up, break into small groups. With your group, consider the following scenarios. For each, answer the question: What might this decision cost you?

- You decide to use the money you earned at your part-time job to buy a bicycle.
- You decide to go to the mall for two hours after school before starting your homework.
- You decide to sleep in on Monday morning and miss the school bus and your algebra test.
- You decide to keep playing in the soccer game after you’ve sprained your ankle.
- Look at the costs. What generalizations can you make about the “economics” of your decisions?

2. With different kinds of costs in mind, read *Difficult Decisions*. Using a colored marker, highlight the reasons that Elvira wanted to come to the United States. Using a different color, highlight the risks she took and dangers she encountered. Use the first color to highlight any positive aspects Elvira found at her job, and the second color to highlight the difficulties she endured. Which color do you see more of? What does that suggest to you about Elvira’s decisions? What questions would you want to ask her so that you could better understand them?

3. Imagine that you are Elvira, trying to decide whether or not to leave her village in Mexico and enter the United States illegally. With your group, fill in the table on the handout called Elvira with what Elvira had to think about as she made her decision. Discuss with your group the information you have written down. What decision would you make if you were Elvira? In the space provided on the sheet, write what you would do and three reasons that you would do it.

4. Now imagine that you are Maria. Complete the handout called *Maria*.

5. Conclude with a class discussion that addresses these questions:

- What do you know now that you didn’t know before about what goes into making the decision to come to the United States?
- What do you know now that you didn’t know before about the situations that undocumented workers face in their jobs?
- What do you think lawmakers should do to address the situations of people like Maria and Elvira?

6. Based on what you have learned, what are the three most important things you want to tell your congressional representatives about the situation of undocumented workers? List them. Then write one paragraph about each of the three topics. In the paragraph, provide information about the topic and your views about it. Turn your three paragraphs into an email letter to your congressional representatives. Send the emails. You may find the contact information for your state representatives at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

In Their Own Words

Reread the stories of Elvira and Maria. Taking the point of view of one of these women, write three imaginary diary entries about your experiences, the decisions you make and the costs you pay for those decisions.

Past to Present

Ever since the Industrial Revolution began in the United States in the early 1800s, workers have struggled against exploitation. Over the past 200 years, the U.S. government has passed numerous laws to address worker exploitation. Break into six groups. Each group will research one of the following laws. Use the questions provided to guide your research. As you research, be sure to pay attention to child labor and farmworkers. Have each group put its law on a timeline and report its findings to the class.

The Labor Laws

Adamson Eight-Hour Act
 National Labor Relations Act (Wagner Act)
 Fair Labor Standards Act
 Occupational Safety and Health Act
 Family and Medical Leave Act

You can start your research using the following Web sites:

Summary of the Major Laws of the Department of Labor
www.dol.gov/opa/aboutdol/lawsprog.htm

How the Weekend Was Won
www.pbs.org/livelihood/workday/weekend/8hourday.html

The Adamson Eight-Hour Act
www.suite101.com/content/the-adamson-eighthour-act-of-1916-a93202

The National Labor Relations Act
www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=old&doc=67

Child Labor in U.S. History
www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborctr/child_labor/about/us_history.html

Family and Medical Leave Act
www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/

Questions to Guide Your Research

- When was the law enacted?
- What does the law do?
- What led to its being enacted?
- To whom does the law apply? To whom does it not apply?
- How does/doesn't the law apply to Maria?
- How would/wouldn't the law apply to you—at your age—if you were working alongside Maria?

READING

Difficult Decisions

Elvira's Story: The Decision to Go

Elvira, a 32-year-old mother, grew up uneducated in a rural area of the central Mexico state of Zacatecas. She had eight siblings. Her father picked crops. "We were so poor that my eldest sister picked up cardboard boxes to make us sandals," she says.

To help her family, Elvira went to the state's capital city and found work. She worked hard—cleaning, cooking and caring for children. Though her boss resisted, Elvira was allowed to enroll in school as long as her studies didn't interfere with her duties. To keep her job and attend classes, Elvira began her day at 4 a.m. She eventually got her diploma.

But when her employers (falsely) accused her of stealing money, she returned to her village and married. "What else can I do here except get married?" she asks. "There weren't stores to work in, there wasn't anything."

Soon poverty forced her hand again. Her husband decided to go north into the United States. She would follow later. Though they were living in extreme need, the decision was not easy.

"We didn't have enough for food or shoes. We couldn't do it anymore. But I thought, how? What if he dies? What if he doesn't come back? What if he goes and leaves me? So many things go through your mind. But I thought, if I don't risk anything, I can't earn anything."

Her husband crossed successfully. A year later, she attempted to cross. Her brother went first, while she waited in Nogales, a Mexican city along the border with Arizona. For three days, she heard nothing.

Then, while returning to the rundown motel where she was waiting, Elvira saw a "man who was walking with his clothes all ripped, all beat up, full of blood, full of mud and dirt. ... It was my brother!"

He had been kidnapped and tortured by the coyotes he had paid. And he had a frantic warning.

"He ran and hugged me and says, 'Don't go. Don't cross. No, let's go back to the farm, but don't go. Don't cross.'"

Elvira was determined. She wanted to keep studying and become a teacher. She believed in the promise that the United States has made to immigrants for more than 200 years: If you work hard, you will succeed here.

After two unsuccessful attempts, Elvira left Juarez in the early morning hours as the lone woman in a group of migrants planning to cross the Rio Grande. Before entering the water, they stripped off their clothes. After reaching the opposite banks, they ran in different directions. As she prepared to sprint after the group, the coyote directed her down another path, telling her that she would be less visible if she didn't follow the larger group. The coyote



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led her down an isolated trail. She asked him: “But why are you taking me this way?” His response was: “Don’t you want to go to your husband?”

As they continued running, Elvira grew uneasy. They finally stopped. Elvira said a quick prayer to herself. The smuggler continued: “Look little lady, if you want to arrive with your old man, you have to cooperate.” Elvira says that a word popped into her head that she didn’t completely understand. As the smuggler inched closer, his intentions clear, she told him: “I have AIDS.” The ruse worked. The man ran away.

“I thought, what could this be that I said? I’ve never told my husband [about] this. Never. Maybe because, I don’t know ... I don’t even like to remember it.”

After she was abandoned by her guide, her third attempt to enter the United States failed, and she was detained by the Border Patrol. She made it across on her fourth try with the help of two teenage boys.

Maria’s Story: The Decisions at Work

Soon after crossing into the United States in 1998, Maria found herself planting tomatoes in Florida, the country’s leading producer of fresh tomatoes. The 30-year-old Guatemalan with four children once worked cleaning hotels in Mexico, but she never worked as hard as she did in the tomato fields.

“I had some friends who said that in the North you earn good money,” she says. “But I’m seeing that’s not the case.”

On her first 12-hour work day, “I cried because I didn’t think I’d make it. Your head hurts because of the [pesticide] spray, your back hurts.”

When working by the hour, Maria says, she typically earns \$5.75. When working by contract—during harvest, for example—she earns 45 cents for every 32-pound bucket she fills with tomatoes. Racing to make as much money as possible, like many of the more than 33,000 farmworkers toiling in Florida’s tomato fields, Maria runs back and forth, filling her bucket and dumping the load onto a nearby truck.

“You have to run to do 150 [buckets] to make your money for the day.”

That is, when the bosses actually pay.

When not battling the heat, the physical demands and the persistent sexual harassment in the fields, Maria has had to worry if, at the end of a work week, she has given away her labor for nothing.

Of one boss, she says, “He doesn’t let you go to the bathroom, and if you do, he yells at you.”

After putting in two weeks of work, the boss told the workers there was no money to pay them.

Somewhere in America, someone probably paid the full price for the tomatoes Maria picked. But she received nothing. And there was nothing she could do.



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Elvira

AREA OF CONCERN	IF I STAY ...	IF I GO ...
Family <i>Parents and siblings</i> <i>Husband</i> <i>Children</i>		
Financial costs of the journey		
List other costs of the journey 1) 2) 3) 4)		
Getting caught on the journey		
Financial prospects in the United States		
Getting caught and deported once working in the United States		
Getting an education and becoming a teacher		

Look at the information you have put into the table. Discuss it with your group. If you were Elvira, what decision would you make?

List three reasons that you would make that decision. Which factors were most important and least important in your decision? Why?

Maria

The table below lists situations that Maria—and many other undocumented women workers—face in their jobs in the food production industry. With your group, read each situation. Write one response Maria might have, and write it as Response A. Think about the possible consequences of that response and write them in the next column. Then think about another response, and write it as Response B. Follow that with the possible consequences of that response.

SITUATION	POSSIBLE RESPONSE "A"	CONSEQUENCES OF "A"	POSSIBLE RESPONSE "B"	CONSEQUENCES OF "B"
12-hour workday				
Headaches from pesticides				
Backache				
\$5.75/hour pay				
45 cents/32-pound bucket				
Sexual harassment by co-workers				
Sexual harassment by bosses				
Not getting paid				

Look at the information you have put into the table. Discuss each situation with your group. Imagine you are Maria. Circle the decision you would make in each situation. In the space below, write why you would make that decision.

Write a one- or two-sentence summary of the situation in which Maria finds herself. What would you do if you were in her shoes?

THEME 3

The Motivation for Movement

Overview

Movement—of people, goods and services—is a central theme in the study of geography. When it comes to human migration, geographers ask: Why do people move? What factors push them to leave a place? What factors pull them toward another? In this lesson, The Motivation for Movement, students apply a geographer’s framework to the migration of women who leave Latin America and enter the United States without legal documentation. Given the high stakes—separation from family, risks to personal safety and workplace exploitation—the motivations for leaving a home country and settling illegally in this one must be particularly powerful.

In this lesson, students explore the motivation for movement among their peers and then compare their classmates’ experiences with those of some of the women profiled in *Injustice on Our Plates*.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the push-pull factors that motivate women to come to the United States without legal status
- Develop empathy for the circumstances of undocumented workers
- Gather data and present it in graphs
- Track the history of border policy along the Rio Grande

Essential Questions

- What factors push women to leave their home countries?
- What factors pull women toward the United States, despite the difficulties that immigrants face when they arrive without legal documents?
- How has U.S. border policy along the Rio Grande developed since the 1940s?

Glossary

human migration [hyoo-muhn my-gray-shuhn]

(noun) the movement of people from one area to another

push-pull [poo sh puh l]

(noun) a theory that says people are pushed by adverse conditions to leave an area and pulled toward another area by the promise of favorable conditions

border policy [bohr-der pawl-uh-see]

(noun) laws, rules and agreements that govern the movement of people into and out of the United States for both short and long periods of time

Materials

Handout: Migration Interviews



Handout: Push-Pull Factors
 Handout: Motivation to Move

Relocation Reasons

1. Use the handout called *Migration Interviews* to interview a classmate about his or her personal and family experiences moving among cities, states or nations. (*Note: If students in your class are sensitive about sharing this information, have students write answers about themselves on the interview form, rather than having students interview each other.*)

2. Use the format shown in *Push-Pull Factors* to make class lists on chart paper of push and pull factors. Have pairs share the push-pull factors they discovered as they interviewed each other and list them on the charts. Once a factor is on the list, add a mark for each time that factor is mentioned again. By the time you're finished, you should have a list of push factors and a list of pull factors. You should also have a record of the number of times each factor was mentioned by your classmates. (*Note: To avoid putting any student in an uncomfortable or potentially dangerous situation, collect the interviews and read aloud people's reasons so that students don't associate specific reasons with individual students. If sharing some information might expose a student and his or her family, do not share it.*)

3. Read *Motivation to Move*. Identify the push-pull factors that shaped the decisions of the women you read about. Add the factors to the part of the chart labeled *Women's Decisions*. As a class, discuss: What similarities, if any, do you see between the experiences of your classmates and the women you read about? What differences, if any, do you see?

4. Working alone or with your partner, make a bar graph of the data you have collected in your class and in the readings. Across the horizontal axis, list the push factors and then the pull factors. Number the vertical axis so that you can make bars to show how many people identified each push and pull factor. Make the bar graphs using three colors: one for the bar of any factor that only your classmates identified, one for any factor that only the women in the report identified and a third for any factor that both classmates and the women identified. This will allow you to see similarities and differences between the women you've read about and your classmates.

5. Study the graph. Discuss with your classmates any insights you have, patterns you see or generalizations you can make. Use these questions to guide the discussion: Why do people move? Do push or pull factors seem more important in the decision to move? How do the reasons for your classmates' movement compare to the reasons on the part of the women in the readings? What might account for similarities and differences?

6. Now think again about your/your family's experience coming to this country. Write a first-person essay describing their/your experience, organizing the essay around the concept of push and pull factors.

In Their Own Words

Use the story of Araceli and a map of the Americas to show her journey. For each arrow that shows movement, identify which push and pull factors were present. You might use different colors to convey that information (don't forget to make a key for your map) or write the

information on the arrows. Take the role of Araceli and write a paragraph that sums up your motives for the moves you have made. Identify whether push or pull factors seemed to be more important.

Past to Present

Learn more about the changes in border policy along the Rio Grande over the past 50 years. Divide into five groups. Each group will take one of the following topics:

- The Bracero Program
- Operation Wetback
- The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965
- Clinton-era policies regarding the U.S.-Mexico border
- Post-9/11 policies regarding the U.S.-Mexico border

With your group, research your topic and create a web page that highlights and organizes the most important information. As a team, use the web pages to create a class website. It should include a homepage that has an overview of border policy, a timeline and a link for each of the five topics.

Here are some sources you can use to get started:

The Border Interactive Timeline

www.pbs.org/kpbs/theborder/history/interactive-timeline.html

U.S.-Mexico Border Policy Report

www.utexas.edu/law/centers/humanrights/borderwall/communities/municipalities-US-Mexico-Border-Policy-Report.pdf

Migration Interviews

People move for many different reasons. Sometimes they leave one place because the situation there is not good for them. They may be persecuted because of their religious beliefs or unable to find jobs in an area that is economically depressed. Geographers call these reasons “push factors,” because they push people out of one place and toward another. Other times, people move because a new place promises a better life. They may want to find better schools or an area where they can afford to buy a home. Geographers call these reasons “pull factors,” because they pull people to a new place. When people decide to move, a combination of push and pull factors usually shapes their decision.

Divide into pairs. Interview your partner to find out how he or she came to live in the area where you live now. Be sure to ask the following questions. (You may ask other questions as well, but don't leave these out.)

1. When did you/your family move to this area?

2. Why?

3. Were there problems where you were living before that you wanted to get away from? If so, what were they?

4. What attracted you to this area?

5. Which do you think was more important in the decision to move—the push factors or the pull factors? What makes you think so?

6. If you know about an earlier generation of your family that came to this country (in other words, if your answers to 1-5 were about moving to your area, but your family was already in the United States), when did they come?

7. Why?

8. What were the push factors that led them to leave their home country?

9. What were the pull factors that attracted them to this country?

Push-Pull Factors

What factors push people to move to a place? What factors push them to leave a place? Make a list of push and pull factors for your class based on the information from the Migration Interviews. Add them under Our Class. After reading Motivation to Move, make a list of push and pull factors for Elvira, Araceli and Cristina. Add them under Women’s Decisions.

OUR CLASS

Push Factors

Pull Factors

WOMEN’S DECISIONS

Push Factors

Pull Factors

READING

Motivation to Move

ELVIRA, a 32-year-old mother, grew up uneducated in a rural area of the central Mexico state of Zacatecas. She had eight siblings. Her father picked crops. “We were so poor that my eldest sister picked up cardboard boxes to make us sandals,” she says.

To help her family, Elvira went to the state’s capital city and found work. She worked hard—cleaning, cooking and caring for children. Though her boss resisted, Elvira was allowed to enroll in school as long as her studies didn’t interfere with her duties. To keep her job and attend classes, Elvira began her day at 4 a.m. She eventually got her diploma.

But when her employers (falsely) accused her of stealing money, she returned to her village and married. “What else can I do here except get married?” she asks. “There weren’t stores to work in, there wasn’t anything.”

Soon poverty forced her hand again. Her husband decided to go north into the United States. She would follow later. Though they were living in extreme need, the decision was not easy.

“We didn’t have enough for food or shoes. We couldn’t do it anymore. But I thought, how? What if he dies? What if he doesn’t come back? What if he goes and leaves me? So many things go through your mind. But I thought, if I don’t risk anything, I can’t earn anything.”

Her husband crossed successfully. A year later, she attempted to cross. Elvira was determined. She wanted to keep studying and become a teacher. She believed in the promise that the United States has made to immigrants for more than 200 years: If you work hard, you will succeed here.

After two unsuccessful attempts, Elvira left Juarez in the early morning hours as the lone woman in a group of migrants planning to cross the Rio Grande. After she was abandoned by her guide, her third attempt to enter the United States failed, and she was detained by the Border Patrol. She made it across on her fourth try with the help of two teenage boys.

ARACELI says she arrived in the United States with the sole desire of finding work and providing for her family but now feels lost. “I’d like to be in a job that’s well-paid, good treatment, to better myself and others,” she says. “But I’m seeing that everything is very bad.”

After a treacherous crossing—she almost died in the desert—she eventually arrived in Georgia and took a job in a restaurant where her sister worked. Cutbacks left her without employment, however, and she migrated to Florida, where she found work at a nursery tending plants.

She lost the position, however, when a co-worker’s husband made an unwanted sexual advance. Though she says the man was clearly at fault, Araceli’s boss found it simpler to get rid of the undocumented worker. After losing her job in November 2009, she found temporary, part-time work picking fruit but was driven from that job, again, by sexually explicit overtures, this time from her supervisor. She lasted less than a few weeks at each job and



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has not worked since. “I’m leaving it in the hands of God to see what happens,” she says. She is deeply concerned that she will not be able to repay the money she owes the coyotes who brought her over the border. “I owe \$2,500, and I don’t know where to find the money to liquidate that debt. And so many problems on top of it.”

CRISTINA Soon after arriving in this country, Cristina found herself picking grapes in the heart of one of America’s most fertile farming regions: California’s San Joaquin Valley. Along with 15 to 20 others, she slept each night on a mattresses in a chicken coop that had been converted to a living quarters for the grape workers.

“The living conditions were horrible, because there was one bathroom for so many people,” she says. “You sleep there with men and women or children. And they’re deplorable conditions, dirty.” She slept lightly out of fear that “someone was going to do something to me.”

“I saw terrible things there. ... Sometimes, I heard about children being abused. But there’s no law, there’s no government. Everyone stays out of it.”

She worked seven days a week. The work was grueling, the pace unrelenting. There were few breaks.

Mornings could be cold and afternoons blazing hot. She had little protection from the elements.

Cristina was not accustomed to such hard labor. She grew up in the city in Mexico, where her father was a politician. She had attended college with the goal of being a teacher. But she made the mistake of answering an advertisement that promised good wages in the United States for educated people like her. She was told she would get her papers and would be working, legally, in an office.

Instead, at 18, she would become a victim of human trafficking. There were no papers. Her guides took her to the vineyard labor camp and left her there. “The people told me that, since I didn’t have documents—not my visa or anything—that I was working illegally in this country. They told me that if I made a move, if I tried to escape, they could kill me. Or they could take it out on my family in my country.”

If she went to the police, she was told, they would only put her behind bars.

After the first 12-hour day, Cristina cried. “I didn’t think I could make it.” But she had little choice but to return to the fields.

When payday came, Cristina was told there was no money for her—that she was working to pay off the expense incurred by those who had brought her to the United States. She had not been told this before. “I asked them how much I was going to have to pay. And they told me, ‘Oh, you have no idea. The debt is very large, but we’ll let you know when you’re done paying.’”

For six months, fear of the police and her captors kept her there. She had no way to contact her family in Mexico. “My father gave me [up] for dead.”

Finally, Cristina’s fear gave way to despair. She could no longer stand captivity. “I decided to escape one night. So, I ran, ran, ran until ... I found a person in a truck.”

The man, it turned out, was the owner of the farm. He was not aware of what was happening in his vineyards and that she was working, essentially, as a slave. The owner helped Cristina, who has remained in the United States and now works to help other exploited farmworkers.

THEME 4

Family Ties

Overview

According to the SPLC report, about 4 million undocumented immigrant women live and work in the United States. These women are motivated by the desire to make life better for their children. Some hope to find jobs that will allow them to send money back to the sons and daughters left behind in their native countries. Others give birth to children who are U.S. citizens while in the United States—complicating their own undocumented status. They live in fear of job-site immigration raids and deportations, which result in personal and economic costs both here and back home. Students will learn how current immigration policies are tied to those costs.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Critically evaluate media messages on the issue of immigration and families
- Illustrate a narrative
- Prepare and conduct an interview
- Prepare and conduct a debate

Essential Questions

- How does undocumented status affect the day-to-day lives of immigrant families?
- In what ways are women particularly affected by immigration policies?
- What is deportation? How does it affect families and their economic situations?
- What has America done to address the issue of separated families?
- In what ways can advocates construct a message to shape public opinion?

Glossary

deportation [dee-pohr-tay-shun]

(*noun*) the act of removing a person to another country

raid [rayd]

(*noun*) a search without warning

undocumented [uhn-dawk-yoo-mehn-tehd]

(*adjective*) lacking proper immigration or working papers

Materials

Reading: *Family Life Complicated by Vulnerable Status*

Internet access to the 16-minute PBS documentary, “Guatemala: In the Shadow of the Raid.” It’s available online at www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/watch/player.html?pkg=rc82guat&seg=1&mod=OL

Handout: Family Ties: Guatemala and Iowa

Real Problems, Real People

1. Throughout American history, immigration rules and policies have shifted and evolved. There have been changes that determine both who gets in and how easily one can become a citizen. That is equally true today. A complex formula leaves undocumented immigrants without many legal options—resulting in workplace raids and deportation, split families and a



cut in economic lifelines. As a class, read *Family Life Complicated by Vulnerable Status*. Based on the reading, discuss the ways in which illegal status can affect the family life of immigrants to the United States.

2. Now, view the documentary, “Guatemala: In the Shadow of the Raid.” The 16-minute film, from the PBS television show “Frontline,” is available online at www.pbs.org/frontlineworld/watch/player.html?pkg=rc82guat&seg=1&mod=0. It chronicles the aftermath of the May 2008 raid of the Agriprocessors, Inc. meat plant in Postville, Iowa—the largest raid in U.S. history. As you view the film, take notes on the effects of the raid on the lives of the workers, using the handout *Family Ties: Guatemala and Iowa*.

3. As a class, discuss how the Southern Poverty Law Center—through *Family Life Complicated by Vulnerable Status*—and the Frontline producers constructed their work to shape how you perceive the problems these families face. For instance, which elements of the written piece are most convincing? (*Note: Students might point out the use of quotes from primary sources, the use of statistics and specific information about the risks and hardships faced by children.*) What elements do the film’s producers use to connect with viewers? (*Note: Students might cite the use of immigrants’ own faces and voices, rather than those of actors; the filming in immigrants’ native countries; a narrative that follows specific people through a bureaucratic process; and even the music used throughout.*)

4. Share your storyboards with the rest of the class. How do your approaches differ? Why might that be the case?

In Their Own Words

1. Working women in America have long struggled with the balance between work and family life. While some have the resources to care for their children and also advance in their chosen careers, others need to make tough choices. Schedule time for an interview with your own mother, grandmother or another female relative who has worked outside the home. Before the interview, draft questions that will help you understand when and where she has worked, what obstacles she has faced and the choices she has made to give you a good life.

2. If you are comfortable doing so, share your interview with the class in oral or written form. What patterns do you notice among the interviews? What differences do you see?

3. Now, compare the answers in your interview with the quotes in *Family Life Complicated by Vulnerable Status*. What hopes, dreams and values are shared among the women? How do their realities differ? What conclusions can you draw?

Past to Present

1. In December 2010, Congress failed to pass what was called the DREAM Act—the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act. The bill was first introduced in 2001. Take notes as you learn more about the bill at the following sites:

National Immigration Law Center
www.nilc.org

The White House
www.whitehouse.gov

Wikipedia
www.wikipedia.org

2. Divide your class into two teams. Within your team, share what you've learned about the Dream Act during your Internet research. What was the bill designed to do? Who drafted the legislation? Who would qualify? How would they qualify? In what ways might it benefit the United States? In what ways might it cost the country? What is the status of the bill for the future?

3. Your teacher will assign your team one of the following positions:

- The Dream Act would be good for the United States.
- The Dream Act would be damaging to the United States.

Research facts and opinions you will use to support your team's position in a debate. Decide on the rules of your debate. For instance, you might want an impartial observer, such as a school administrator, to declare the winner.

4. It's time to debate. Instead of arguing for your team's position, switch sides and support the other perspective/position instead. Then, debate. After the debate, work together to reach an understanding through compromise. Write a brief summary of your outcome.

READING

Family Life Complicated by Vulnerable Status

Many undocumented women assume the role of breadwinner when they arrive in the United States. They frequently serve as the linchpin that holds together families spread across different countries.

And not only are these women helping to feed Americans through their labor, they're raising a generation of Americans.

No less than 4 million U.S.-born children are living in households with at least one undocumented parent. Because they were born here, these children are U.S. citizens. Another 1.5 million children came to the United States with their parents and are undocumented. Many have spent much of their lives here and have only dim memories of their native countries.

Mainly because of their relatively young age, undocumented immigrants are more than twice as likely as U.S.-born residents to live in what some would call a "traditional" family—a couple and their children. Forty-seven percent of undocumented immigrant households consist of a couple with children, compared with just 21 percent of U.S. citizen households.

As these undocumented women pursue a brighter future for their children and take on more responsibility as providers, their families are subject to stresses unlike any other sector of American society.

The women interviewed for the SPLC report spoke, often while choking back emotion, of the fear they felt of being separated from their children; of the pressures to pay back loans used to secure passage to the United States; and of the heartache of being unable to visit ailing, elderly parents and other family members back home.

Women like Maria Concepcion, 27, carry the constant fear of losing their children as they go about their daily activities. Her daughter is a U.S. citizen, but Maria Concepcion has only a Mexican identification. If she is detained, she wonders: "What would happen to my daughter? Would they take her away from me? Would they let me take her?"

Many also said their children are used as leverage against them. Abusive managers and other predators use the threat of deportation and the resulting separation from children to squelch complaints about pay or working conditions, or to keep women from reporting sexual harassment, assaults or other crimes.

Simona, a farmworker in Florida, said she doesn't speak up about mistreatment in the workplace, because to draw attention to herself would put her children in jeopardy.

"I'm afraid for my children, because I want to continue giving them a good life," she says. "That's why I haven't tried to report anything. Here, you have to keep quiet and put up with everything."

Mabel, a farmworker in New York, articulated a frequent lament among the women: the constant fear of arrest and its corrosive effect on family life.

“I can’t do anything,” she says. “I can’t take my daughter out for a walk, to stroll around, go to McDonald’s, take them to eat where they want to go. They have to be locked in the house. I can’t even take them to the store, because immigration is always around.”

Rosa, who worked at the infamous Agriprocessors Inc. slaughterhouse in Postville, Iowa, said she has been left to care for two children after her husband was detained in a workplace raid and ultimately deported.

“It was very sad, because he wanted to see his daughters, but we couldn’t hug him or be close to him,” she says.

For women who have left children behind in their country of origin, the separation can be wrenching. But they are, essentially, faced with choosing between providing for their children’s basic needs or allowing them to drown in poverty.

Even as they endure separation from their relatives, alienation in their new country and some of the worst conditions the U.S. labor market can offer, these women fight to elevate their families.

Pablo, a high school student, is proud of his mother, a meatpacking worker in North Carolina, and understands the sacrifices that his parents have made to provide a brighter future for him.

“They [have given me] an opportunity, not just to find out about who I am, but what’s out there,” Pablo says. “I’m just proud of what they’ve done.”

Family Ties: Guatemala and Iowa

The PBS Frontline documentary “Guatemala: In the Shadow of the Raid” tells about the aftermath of a May 2008 immigration raid at a meat plant in Postville, Iowa. Most of the workers were from two small villages—El Rosario and San Jose Calderas—in the Guatemalan highlands.

As you watch the documentary, take notes to answer the following questions:

1. Who is William Toj? Why did he immigrate to the United States?

2. How long had William worked in Postville before he was arrested?

3. What charges were brought against the undocumented men? What happened to them?

4. Who is Rosita? Why did she and other undocumented women remain in Postville? Describe their lives there.

5. After the raid, what was life like for American families in Postville?

6. How much did it cost William Toj to come to the United States? Where did he get the money?

7. What is William’s life like now? What does he see in his future?

THEME 5

Paying With Their Health

Overview

Undocumented immigrant workers are a huge part of the American food production industry. Many of the jobs involve health risks. Unwilling or unable to complain about working conditions, the immigrants routinely suffer chronic problems brought about by pesticide use, harsh weather and the lack of proper equipment. Using primary sources, students will learn more about these conditions—from the past and the present.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Discern similarities and differences using multiple texts, including Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*
- Compare the conditions of immigrant laborers in the food production industry during two points in time
- Draft an outline for a novel based on current workplace environments described in the report
- Dramatize first-hand accounts of the work lives of undocumented immigrants
- Evaluate web information on the issue

Essential Questions

- What are the circumstances under which immigrant laborers work?
- What are the health effects on immigrant farmworkers in those circumstances?
- What is the history of the treatment of these workers in the food production industry? How has it changed?
- What is the government doing about the issue?

Glossary

herbicide [huhr-buh-syde]

(*noun*) a chemical used to kill unwanted plants, such as weeds

pesticide [peh-stuh-syde]

(*noun*) a chemical used to kill pests, such as rodents or insects

neurological [nuhr-uh-law-jih-kuhl]

(*adjective*) relating to the body’s nervous system

repetitive motion injury [ruh-peh-tih-tihv moh-shun ihn-jur-ee]

(*noun*) an injury to a part of the body caused by performing the same motion over and over again

toxic [tahk-sick]

(*adjective*) having a chemical nature that is harmful to health or lethal in certain quantities

Materials

Reading: *Excerpt from Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle*

Reading: *Chicken—“Racing With the Machines”*

Reading: *Isabel*

Policy Recommendations (available online at <http://splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/injustice-on-our-plates/recommendations>)



A Modern 'Jungle'

1. Although it's a novel, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* is based upon his investigation of working conditions in American slaughterhouses and meatpacking facilities. Those food production factories depended on the labor of immigrant workers who faced dangerous and even life-threatening conditions each day they went to work. Sinclair's novel was published in 1906. Included as a reading is an excerpt from Chapter 9 of the novel. Divide your class into two groups, with one group reading the excerpt. As you read, make one list of phrases that describes the environment of the facility and another that describes its hazards.

If you are in the other group, review *Chicken—“Racing With the Machines”* and *Isabel*. (Note: Each student should have a copy of both readings.) Like the first group, make a list of phrases in each reading that describes the workers' environments and another that describes the health hazards they face.

2. Meet again as a class, with each group sharing its work. Discuss: How alike are your lists? How do the working environments described in the readings compare? How are the real or potential injuries similar or different? What conclusions can you draw from the comparison of these two historical periods of immigrant labor?

3. Upton Sinclair used his short-term experience in a cattle slaughterhouse as the basis for his novel, entertaining readers even as he educated them about the conditions there. Individually, choose either *Chicken—“Racing With the Machines”* or *Isabel* as a potential basis for a novel or film. Then, write an outline that you think would interest a publisher or producer in your story. For instance, what do you imagine is the background story of Isabel and her husband? Where did they come from before migrating to New York? What circumstances brought them there? What are their joys and hardships? How does their status as undocumented immigrants affect their everyday life? How do the hazards and long hours of their working environment affect their individual health? Share your outline as an oral “pitch” to classmates. Would they read the book or watch the film?

In Their Own Words

1. Although *Chicken—“Racing With the Machines”* and *Isabel* are short, they both include first-hand descriptions of the physical and emotional challenges undocumented immigrants endure every day in the food production industry. In pairs, choose one of the readings. One of you should take the role of the immigrant worker (either Isabel or Rosa). The other should take the role of a physician.

2. As “Isabel” or “Rosa,” describe to the “physician” the physical and emotional issues that are the result of your work environment. In character, act out each of the ailments from which you suffer. If you are the “physician,” write down her list of complaints as part of her medical report. What actions would you recommend? (Note: The “physician” might recommend surgery or physical therapy for Isabel's hands, pain relievers for both Isabel and Rosa, or even quitting or changing their jobs.)

3. Staying in character, now discuss which of the physician's recommendations are realistic. What are the obstacles? What might be the penalties of taking the recommendations? Along with other pairs of students, share your conversation with the class. What conclusions can you draw about the options that immigrant workers have to improve their situations?

Past to Present

1. Public reaction to Upton Sinclair's novel, *The Jungle*, led to the passage of the 1906 Meat

Inspection Act and the same year's Pure Food and Drug Act. In pairs or small groups, research these two pieces of legislation. What current government agency did the Pure Food and Drug Act eventually establish?

2. Unfortunately, those changes did little to protect the health and lives of immigrant farmworkers. As part of its report, *Injustice on Our Plates: Immigrant Women in the U.S. Food Industry*, the Southern Poverty Law Center has also issued recommendations for changes within several government agencies. You can read its recommendations online at <http://splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/injustice-on-our-plates/recommendations>. What do these recommendations point out as continuing problems for these workers?

3. Within your group, choose one recommendation that most interests you or might most directly apply in your community or state. Using an online search engine, create a list of websites that would provide a bank of information for further researching the topic. As you create the list, evaluate the sites as credible sources of information. As an extension activity, continue to research the topic and communicate what you've learned in a school newspaper editorial, create a classroom wiki set up to add new information on undocumented immigrants or make an oral presentation.

READING

Excerpt from Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*

There were the men in the pickle-rooms, for instance, where old Antanas had gotten his death; scarce a one of these that had not some spot of horror on his person. Let a man so much as scrape his finger pushing a truck in the pickle-rooms, and he might have a sore that would put him out of the world; all the joints in his fingers might be eaten by the acid, one by one.

Of the butchers and floor-men, the beef-boners and trimmers, and all those who used knives, you could scarcely find a person who had the use of his thumb; time and time again the base of it had been slashed, till it was a mere lump of flesh against which the man pressed the knife to hold it. The hands of these men would be criss-crossed with cuts, until you could no longer pretend to count them or to trace them. They would have no nails—they had worn them off pulling hides; their knuckles were swollen so that their fingers spread out like a fan.

There were men who worked in the cooking-rooms, in the midst of steam and sickening odors, by artificial light; in these rooms the germs of tuberculosis might live for two years, but the supply was renewed every hour.

There were the beef-luggers, who carried two-hundred-pound quarters into the refrigerator-cars; a fearful kind of work, that began at four o'clock in the morning, and that wore out the most powerful men in a few years.

There were those who worked in the chilling-rooms, and whose special disease was rheumatism; the time-limit that a man could work in a chilling-rooms was said to be five years.

There were the woolpluckers, whose hands went to pieces even sooner than the hands of the pickle-men; for the pelts of the sheep had to be painted with acid to loosen the wool, and then the pluckers had to pull out this wool with their bare hands, till the acid had eaten their fingers off.

There were those who made the tins for the canned-meat; and their hands, too, were a maze of cuts, and each cut represented a chance for blood-poisoning.

Some worked at the stamping-machines, and it was very seldom that one could work long there at the pace that was set, and not give out and forget himself, and have a part of his hand chopped off.

There were the “hoisters,” as they were called, whose task it was to press the lever which lifted the dead cattle off the floor. They ran along upon a rafter, peering down through the damp and the steam; and as old Durham's architects had not built the killing-room for the convenience of the hoisters, at every few feet they would have to stoop under a beam, say four feet above the one they ran on; which got them into the habit of stooping, so that in a few years they would be walking like chimpanzees.

Worst of any, however, were the fertilizer-men, and those who served in the cooking-rooms. These people could not be shown to the visitor—for the odor of a fertilizer-man would scare any ordinary visitor at a hundred yards, and as for the other men, who worked in tank-rooms full of steam, and in some of which there were open vats near the level of the floor, their peculiar trouble was that they fell into the vats; and when they were fished out, there was never enough of them left to be worth exhibiting—sometimes they would be overlooked for days, till all but the bones of them had gone out to the world as Durham’s Pure Leaf Lard!

The Jungle, Upton Sinclair (1906), Chapter 9

READING

Chicken—‘Racing With the Machines’

A “modern” poultry plant is a violent machine that kills, eviscerates and cuts apart millions of chickens a day. Rosa—and tens of thousands of Latino men and women who work on the “dis-assembly line”—are disposable cogs in this apparatus.

Hung on hooks and stuck on conveyor cones, chicken carcasses stream by at a rate of hundreds per minute as workers—standing shoulder-to-shoulder, bundled in sweaters and aprons, and armed with scissors and knives—make repeated cuts, up to 30,000 repetitions per shift.

“I was dizzy from so many chickens that I saw pass by,” Rosa says. “No matter how fast you worked, that belt never slowed down. All day, it was full of chicken.”

Supervisors with stopwatches keep a close eye on the workers to monitor their productivity.

“Cutting wings, they would even check how many chickens we cut per minute, measuring us like machines,” said one Mexican woman who worked for Tyson Foods Inc. in Arkansas. “And you do it to not lose your job. You were racing with the machines.”

Working in a chicken factory is one of the most dangerous occupations in America. In the ten years ending in 2008, 100 poultry workers died in the United States, and 300,000 were injured, many suffering the loss of a limb or debilitating repetitive motion injuries.

Marta, 45, recalls the day her nephew lost a hand in a machine that grinds chicken feet: “When he was taking out a piece to clean the machine, a crew leader pushed a green button and turned it on. And his hand got ground up. I heard him screaming.”

Even in the absence of an obviously serious injury like the loss of a limb or a broken bone, the pain is constant. Many immigrants rely on over-the-counter pain relievers imported from Central America, which some call “vitamins.”



ARMONDO BELLMAS

READING

Isabel

Like other migrant farmworkers, Isabel's workday is decided by the season. The 39-year-old farmworker in upstate New York has picked strawberries, grapes and apples. Regardless of the crop, her days usually begin at 4:30 a.m. She and her husband wake up, make a few tacos for lunch and brew up coffee before making their way to the fields and orchards.

"There are a lot of people who can't take this work," she says. "I've seen that people who just arrived and take this work, they quit. They don't like it. It's hard."

But Isabel and her husband take pride in their work. "We've done it for a long time and we know how to do it."

During her time in the fields, Isabel has learned that a grapevine can live for many years, but it takes a practiced and skilled hand to prune it correctly.

Working in these fields takes a physical toll. At times, Isabel must spend whole days hunched over. In addition, "we have a lot of hand movement and use big scissors to cut the little branches and cutters for the big branches."

At the end of the day, the pain can be numbing, Isabel says. "Sometimes I don't feel my hands. I feel like an animal bit me. I have a pulsing in my arms, and I feel the pain when I sleep. It's like biting me. It's intolerable the pain, from using the scissors so much."

She also suffers from headaches from the pesticides. "It's such a strong smell," she says. "When I start to breathe that in, my head starts to hurt, and I feel nauseated."

She earns roughly \$40 a day, but she does not collect a paycheck. Her husband gets a single check for both of them.

THEME 6

Vital Work

Overview

Many Americans take for granted that they can get the food they want just about any time and anywhere. They can buy tomatoes in the dead of winter, oranges even when they live in a place too cold for oranges to grow, and grape juice in big bottles even if they've never seen a grapevine. Theme 6, Vital Work, will help students make connections between the foods they eat every day and the harsh experiences of the undocumented female workers who play an essential role in bringing that food to them.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Connect the food they eat with the experiences of women who work in the food industry
- Understand how some people's privileges depend on the exploitation of others
- Develop empathy for the circumstances of undocumented workers

Essential Questions

- How is the food you eat connected to women who enter the country without authorization so they can work in agriculture and the food industry?
- How and why can many Americans get fresh fruits and vegetables all year, even when they are out of season?
- How does the exploitation of some people make possible the privilege of others?

Glossary

exploitation [eks-ploy-tay-shun]

(*noun*) the act of using something in an unjust or cruel manner

harassment [huh-rass-mehnt]

(*noun*) behavior meant to be disturbing or threatening

itinerant [eye-tin-uh-reht]

(*adjective*) going from place to place, especially in a regular circuit

fumigant [fyoo-muh-guhnt]

(*noun*) a chemical compound used as a pesticide or deodorizer

cog [kawg]

(*noun*) a person who plays a minor part in a large organization

minimum wage [min-uh-muh m wey]

(*noun*) the lowest wage that an employer is allowed by law to pay workers

Materials

Reading: *Grapes*

Reading: *Tomatoes*

Reading: *Chickens*

Reading: *Oranges*



Making the Connections

1. Very few Americans grow their own food. Instead, we rely on a vast food production industry. The process starts on huge farms, some covering thousands of acres. From those huge farms, crops and livestock are often sent to factories for processing before being shipped to supermarkets for consumers to buy. Begin your work on this lesson by keeping track of what you eat for a day. Write it down so that you can look at it in class. (You don't need to keep track of how much you eat—just what you eat.)

2. The immigrants you will read about work with tomatoes, grapes, oranges and chicken. But keep in mind that many other crops and livestock rely on the labor of undocumented farmworkers, too. Check your food list. Did you eat any tomatoes, grapes, oranges or chicken yesterday? At first, you may think that none of them are on your list. But think again. You may not have eaten any fresh tomatoes but, if you ate pizza, you ate tomato sauce. You may not have eaten any grapes, but there might have been raisins in your breakfast cereal or wine vinegar in your salad dressing. You get the idea. As a class, brainstorm the different forms in which each of these items might appear in your food. Record your answers on four lists—one for each food—on chart paper.

3. Divide into four groups. Within your group, choose one of the four food items that you want to know more about. (*Note: Make sure that each food type is covered by at least one group.*) Then read the handout on that food: *Grapes, Tomatoes, Chickens or Oranges*. Highlight the quotations from the workers. With your group, discuss the following questions: What do the women have to say about their work experiences? What makes the work difficult? What do they get paid for their work? About how much does the product cost consumers like you?

4. Working with your group, make a storyboard that shows your product's journey from the farm to your plate. Include the following in your storyboard: illustrated frames that show the working women's experiences, the amount of money they make, where the product goes once it leaves the farm or processing plant and what you paid for it. The final image on your storyboard should be the food on your plate or your happy face after you eat the food.

5. Now change one of the steps on your storyboard. For example, if one frame of your story shows that the farm workers earn less than minimum wage, change it so that they earn minimum wage. Would the subsequent steps change because that step changed? If so, change them and talk with your group about the effects of farmworkers being paid minimum wage. Try changing a different step in the process and see what does or doesn't change as a result. With your group, make some notes to answer these questions: What would change if farmworkers could not be exploited so easily? For example, what would change if farmworkers were American citizens? If they had to be paid minimum wage? If they could fight for better conditions without fear of facing possible jail time or deportation? Would food be more expensive? Do consumers benefit when farm owners hire undocumented workers? As a consumer, how do you feel about that? Have a class discussion on the subject.

6. If time permits, find out about farm work in your own state. What crops and/or livestock are raised there? Who owns the farms? Who works on the farms? Do farm owners have difficulty finding workers? Under what circumstances do farmworkers toil? What laws, if any, protect them? Are those laws adhered to in your state? If possible, gather data by having class members interview one or more farmworkers, farm owners and state policy makers.

In Their Own Words

Take the role of one of the women you have read about. In her voice, write a letter to the students in your class. In the letter, describe your situation and what you go through to help

bring food to American consumers. Trade your letter with another student. Then, in your own voice, answer the other student's letter.

Past to Present

The exploitation of farmworkers has been going on for a long time. In this activity, you can get a sense of that history. In 1960, CBS aired a documentary called "Harvest of Shame." Reported by renowned journalist Edward R. Murrow, the hour-long show revealed to American viewers the deplorable conditions under which migrant farmworkers lived and labored. Watch a brief segment of "Harvest of Shame." (It's about 15 minutes long.) Discuss the segment with your class, using these questions as a guide. What did you notice in the report? What surprised you? What in these workers' experiences is similar to the experiences of the women you have read about? What is different? What might account for the similarities and differences? What effect does seeing the experiences have on you that reading the women's experiences did not have?

READING

Grapes

Virtually all of the country's table grapes, and 90 percent of its wine, comes from California, which boasts 1 million acres of vineyards. Forty-eight percent of this acreage is used for wine, 40 percent for raisins and 12 percent for table grapes.

Grapevines require delicate handiwork. Several times a year, they are tied, trained and trimmed to expose grapes to both breezes and sun.

The August-September harvest is a stressful, backbreaking race against rot and rain as table grapes, handled like china, are rushed to market and raisin grapes are dried on paper on the ground. The single most labor-intensive activity in U.S. agriculture is the harvesting of 250,000 acres of raisin grapes near Fresno, a job involving some 30,000 workers.

After harvest, workers prune 80 percent of the vine back, leaving just enough shoots and buds to optimize grape production year after year.

Workers contend with horrendous cold or heat, accidents, a lack of water and shade, and exposure to pesticides. In 2008, a pregnant teenager and a 37-year-old man died of heat stroke while working in vineyards in California's San Joaquin Valley.

Cristina, an immigrant from Mexico, worked seven days a week. The work was grueling, the pace unrelenting. There were few breaks. Mornings could be cold and afternoons blazing hot. She had little protection from the elements.

After the first 12-hour day, Cristina cried. "I didn't think I could make it." But she had little choice but to return to the fields. When payday came, Cristina was told there was no money for her—that she was working to pay off the expense incurred by those who had brought her to the United States.

Because undocumented workers fear being deported, they accept what they can get for their labor. When pruning, they are paid by the "piece"—13 cents per pruned point. "To earn \$80 or \$90 a day, you have to do 500," said Isabel, 39, a Mexican worker. Harvesters earn 1 to 5 cents per pound for grape clusters that sell in grocery stores for \$1.40.

The result of the backbreaking, low-paying labor that women like Isabel and Cristina do is that, in the California vineyards, pay has dropped to about \$5 an hour, far below California's minimum wage of \$8.

READING

Tomatoes

Arriving on supermarket shelves during the coldest days of the year, year-round tomatoes are an affordable luxury that Americans take for granted. Each year, we eat 20 pounds per person.

In Florida, the country's largest producer of fresh-market tomatoes, each tomato is tended by farmworkers like Delfina, Maria, Teresa and Josefina. Each one takes three months of sweaty, exhausting work in fields covered with poisons. From planting to harvest, day after sunny day, these women toil under dark shadows of exploitation and fear.

More than 33,000 farmworkers, almost all of them undocumented Latinos, produce Florida's annual crop of 1 billion pounds of fresh-market tomatoes, a crop whose wholesale value exceeds \$619 million.

The itinerant farmworker makes this all possible. But for every dollar we spend on a supermarket tomato, the field worker who picks it gets just 1 cent.

Tomatoes are grown on 31,000 acres in south Florida. As seeds are sprouted in greenhouses, workers on foot and on tractor plow narrow, raised beds saturated with fumigants that kill everything in the sandy soil. The beds are covered with plastic sheets, and holes are punched 18 to 30 inches apart. Workers then walk the rows, planting 4,000 seedlings per acre. Four-foot stakes are driven between the plants.

A month later, workers prune and tie every plant to twine that is stretched between the stakes. As the plant grows, the twine is adjusted to keep the plant upright and the new tomatoes off the ground.

Over three months, Florida tomato plants and soil are sprayed or dusted with as many as 72 different pesticides. At 217 pounds per acre, this is the greatest use of pesticides in U.S. farming. Applied by tractor and hand-held sprayers, the poisons keep the tomatoes free of bugs, diseases and blemishes.

Warnings, protective clothing, washing water and bilingual safety instructions are required, but the rules are often ignored and workers are often exposed while in the fields. They work despite headaches, rashes and vomiting—afraid of losing their meager pay.

The harvest is a frenetic race to handpick the tomatoes and get them to the markets. Farmworkers fill a large plastic bucket with 32 pounds of tomatoes and run with it to a truck, where it is dumped into large boxes. For each 32-pound bucket, the worker gets 45 to 50 cents, a wage unchanged in the last 30 years. A worker typically fills 100 to 150 buckets a day, earning a "piece-rate" wage of \$45 to \$75 per day.

For all their labors, Florida tomato workers live in poverty. They have no job protections. They get no vacation or sick days. Few have health insurance. They reside in temporary, crowded, migrant camps or rundown trailers, shacks and tenement apartments. If they have

legal immigration status, they are eligible for food stamps, Medicaid and other programs for the poor—but the vast majority are not.

Soon after crossing into the United States in 1998, Maria found herself planting tomatoes in Florida. The 30-year-old Guatemalan with four children once did the difficult work of cleaning hotels in Mexico, but she never worked as hard as she did in the tomato fields.

On her first 12-hour work day, “I cried because I didn’t think I’d make it. Your head hurts because of the [pesticide] spray, your back hurts.”

When working by the hour, Maria says, she typically earns \$5.75. When working by contract—during harvest, for example—she earns 45 cents for every 32-pound bucket she fills with tomatoes. Racing to make as much money as possible, like many of the more than 33,000 farmworkers toiling in Florida’s tomato fields, Maria runs back and forth, filling her bucket and dumping the load onto a nearby truck.

“You have to run to do 150 [buckets] to make your money for the day.”

That is, when the bosses actually pay.

When not battling the heat, the physical demands and the persistent sexual harassment in the fields, Maria has had to worry if, at the end of a work week, she has given away her labor for nothing.

Of one boss, she says, “He doesn’t let you go to the bathroom, and if you do, he yells at you.”

After putting in two weeks of work, the boss told the workers there was no money to pay them. Somewhere in America, someone probably paid the full price for the tomatoes Maria picked. But she received nothing. And there was nothing she could do.

This winter, Maria and the other women farmworkers will be back in Florida’s fields, growing tomatoes for America.

When you buy one, remember them.

READING

Chickens

There's a reason that chicken is cheap. Her name is Rosa.

Five years ago, with her daughter wrapped in a shawl on her back, Rosa walked, rode and swam from Guatemala to the United States to escape war and poverty. She found work in an Iowa chicken factory that welcomed undocumented immigrants into its workforce.

In a loud room chilled to 47 degrees, she stood for up to 14 hours, five nights a week, cutting skin and bone from chicken breasts with a pair of scissors. Her boss wanted 15 breasts cleaned every minute, 900 per hour. If she went to the bathroom, the breasts piled up and her boss yelled at her. So she held her urine as water from the carcasses splashed on her apron and shoes, soaking them and chilling her.

On the chicken line, Rosa earned \$6.25 per hour. The breasts she cleaned were sold in grocery stores, three per package, for about \$3 a pound. For each \$6.25 she earned, she trimmed and deboned \$900 worth of chicken breasts—hour after hour.

Rosa's labor, and that of 250,000 other workers who toil in 174 major chicken factories, have helped make chicken America's cheapest and most popular meat protein. At least half of these workers are Latino and more than half are women. Agriculture experts say 1983—the year McDonald's introduced the Chicken McNugget—proved a turning point in American chicken history. The race for cheap chicken parts has more than doubled the number of chickens butchered to 8 billion a year. Unionized meatpacking plants collapsed, and mega-factories arose in the rural South and Midwest.

Nothing in her 33 years in rural Guatemala, where chicken was a rare Sunday treat, could have prepared Rosa for the work that she did in Iowa.

A “modern” poultry plant is a violent machine that kills, eviscerates and cuts apart millions of chickens a day. Rosa and the tens of thousands of Latino men and women who work on the “disassembly line” are disposable cogs in this apparatus.

Hung on hooks and stuck on conveyor cones, chicken carcasses stream by at a rate of hundreds per minute as workers—standing shoulder-to-shoulder, bundled in sweaters and aprons, and armed with scissors and knives—make repeated cuts, up to 30,000 repetitions per shift.

“I was dizzy from so many chickens that I saw pass by,” Rosa says. “No matter how fast you worked, that belt never slowed down. All day, it was full of chicken.”

Supervisors with stopwatches keep a close eye on the workers to monitor their productivity.

“Cutting wings, they would even check how many chickens we cut per minute, measuring us like machines,” said one Mexican woman who worked for Tyson Foods Inc. in Arkansas. “And you do it to not lose your job. You were racing with the machines.”

Working in a chicken factory is one of the most dangerous occupations in America. In the ten years ending in 2008, 100 poultry workers died in the United States, and 300,000 were injured, many suffering the loss of a limb or debilitating repetitive motion injuries.

Marta, 45, recalls the day her nephew lost a hand in a machine that grinds chicken feet: “When he was taking out a piece to clean the machine, a crew leader pushed a green button and turned it on. And his hand got ground up. I heard him screaming.”

Even in the absence of an obviously serious injury like the loss of a limb or a broken bone, the pain is constant. Many immigrants rely on over-the-counter pain relievers imported from Central America, which some call “vitamins.”

READING

Oranges

Stand in a grocery store and think of Florida. Chances are you'll think of orange juice.

Decades of jingles have engrained in our culture the notion that Florida sunshine comes in half-gallons, gushing with goodness. "Throughout the ages," the state reminds us, "the citrus fruit has been a symbol of eternal love, happiness, and even holiness."

Those are not the words we hear from Catalina, Veronica, Maria and others who help form the unseen army of 20,000 undocumented workers who pick Florida's juicy Valencia oranges. They tell stories of living in poverty and being cheated out of wages, exposed to pesticides and subjected to rampant sexual harassment.

The disconnect between OJ's image and reality is a shameful example of the hidden costs in our food, costs borne by the hands that feed us.

Christopher Columbus brought oranges to Florida in 1493, where they've been a major crop—America's chief source of OJ—since before the Civil War. Today, the average picker works 1,500 hours each season, climbing wooden ladders into each of the state's 60 million trees, dropping each orange, one by one, into a canvas bag slung over the shoulder. When the bag is full, the worker climbs down and dumps the 90 pounds of fruit into a large bin. It takes 10 bags to fill the bin, which is then picked up by a tractor.

A full bin pays \$8 to \$10, or about 80 cents for each 90-pound bag. A fast worker in a high-producing grove can fill eight to 10 bags an hour and earn, at best, \$15,000 for the eight-month season. Drought and disease in orange groves have lowered these wages in recent years.

It takes 18 oranges to make a half gallon of juice, which brings \$3.59 in grocery stores. The picker gets 3.5 cents, about 1 percent.

Picking oranges has always attracted migrant labor. But over the past 25 years, orange growers—squeezed by Brazilian imports and supported by laissez faire government policies—have joined in a "race to the bottom" in which undocumented workers are routinely exploited, cheated and abused, says Greg Schell of the Migrant Farmworker Justice Project in Florida. Labor rates have remained unchanged.

Countless Latino workers, weary and frightened after a harrowing passage across the U.S.-Mexico border, find their first work in Florida's 400,000 acres of picturesque orange groves. Unable to speak or read English, isolated from family and ignorant of wage and worker rules, they are America's most vulnerable and fungible work force. Here, for example, is an excerpt from an interview with Catalina, a 33-year-old Guatemalan:

Q: Do you know what minimum wage is?

A: No ... I don't know how to read to check the amounts or dates.

Q: Why don't you ask them?

A: When I'm a person with papers, or a man, maybe I can complain. But because I need to work, and I don't have papers, I don't have rights. I'm better off keeping quiet, even if they pay me \$20 or \$30.

THEME 7

Acting Locally

Overview

The problems that undocumented workers face can seem overwhelming to students, who might think, “The problems are so big; what difference can I possibly make?” Theme 7, Acting Locally, will help students recognize that they have the power to help improve the situation of undocumented workers by taking action in their own communities. In these activities, students will review some of the problems faced by women who enter the United States without legal documentation, research programs in their state that address these problems and identify ways they can help.

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify problems that undocumented women workers face
- Brainstorm possible actions they can take to change these women’s situations
- Explore how government and non-government agencies have helped shape and implement policies to improve the situation of undocumented workers
- Develop a plan for taking action locally to change the situation of undocumented women workers

Essential Questions

- What problems do undocumented women workers face?
- How can people help improve the situations of undocumented immigrant workers?
- How have government and private agencies attempted to help undocumented workers?

Glossary

harassment [huh-rass-mehnt]

(noun) behavior meant to be disturbing or threatening

prosperity [pro-sper-uh-tee]

(noun) good fortune; financial wellbeing

discrimination [dih-skrim-uh-nay-shuhn]

(noun) unfair treatment of someone based on their membership in a group defined by race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation or other factors

Materials

Reading: *The Experiences of Undocumented Workers*

Handout: Graphic Organizer: Web

Taking Action

1. Before you can think about taking action to address the problems of undocumented women workers, you need to know more about those problems. Begin your work on this lesson by



reading *The Experiences of Undocumented Workers*. (Note: You may want to divide the reading so that everyone reads the introductory paragraph, and then half the students read the segment about Yazmin while the other half read the segment about Margot, Carina and Catalina.)

2. Divide into three groups. Within your group, choose one of the following central problems that you've read about: 1) moving to follow crops; 2) poor and dangerous work conditions; and 3) wage theft. (Note: Make sure that student groups are covering all three of the problems.) With your group, use the web graphic organizer to think more deeply about the difficulties that the women face. For example, Margot and her family don't live in one place year-round; instead, they follow the crops so that they'll have work during the entire year. In the center of the web, write "Follow the crops." In the outer circles, put problems that might arise as a consequence of following the crops. One circle might say "Kids can't stay in school." Another might say "Live in migrant housing." When your group finishes its web, share it with the class.

3. Now with your group, study your web and zero in on one problem that you would like to address. First, find out anything you can about the specifics of the problem in your state. For example, are there a large number of children of immigrant laborers who can't attend school? Is there daycare available for women workers who have small children? Gather information about the problem in your community or state.

4. See what programs, if any, already address the problem in your community or state. How do people intervene to improve the lives of immigrant farm workers there? What organizations or programs serve them? You may find, for example, that there are private organizations or state programs that provide healthcare to migrant farm workers. Read about one of them. Answer these questions about the organization/program: What does the organization/program do? How long has it been in operation? Which problem or problems that you identified in the web does the organization/program address? How does it address the problem(s)? How does the group/program define the population it serves? Does it distinguish between agricultural workers who are in the country legally and those who are not? How do the workers respond to the services provided? Present your findings to the class so that everyone gets a sense of the breadth of both problems and actions that address them.

5. With your group, discuss what you can do about the problem. That might mean contributing in some way to a program/group that's already working on it. For example, maybe you could volunteer to help in some way, create a community service-learning project that you and your classmates could participate in, or hold a fund-raiser to help the group continue its work. Or, if you see that there is a need for a particular service that isn't being addressed (e.g., daycare), discuss how you might help get that service provided. You might, for example, make a presentation to a community or state agency that works with farm labor or immigration. The presentation should describe the conditions that make the service necessary and offer ideas about how that service can be provided.

6. As a class, sum up what you've learned by putting together into one presentation what each group has discovered about problems undocumented immigrant workers face and real and possible solutions to those problems.

In Their Own Words

Think about what you have learned about the experiences of undocumented workers, particularly in your community or state. Write a journal entry or school newspaper editorial that expresses how you feel about the contribution of undocumented workers and the need for changing one or more of their circumstances.

Past to Present

Government and private agencies have taken action over the years to improve the situation of undocumented immigrant workers. Research one of these organizations to find out what it has done and continues to do. Share your findings with the class.

The Agencies

National Immigration Law Center
www.nilc.org/index.htm

National Employment Law Project
www.nelp.org/index.php/content/content_issues/category/immigrants_and_work/

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights
www.nnirr.org/about/index.php

United States Department of Justice Office of Special Counsel for Immigration-Related Unfair Employment Practices
www.justice.gov/crt/about/osc/

American Civil Liberties Union Immigrants' Rights Project
www.aclu.org/immigrants-rights

Immigration Policy Center
www.immigrationpolicy.org/index.php?content=home

National Immigration Forum
www.immigrationforum.org/

Questions to Guide Your Research

- What is the name of the organization you are researching?
- Is it part of the government or a private agency?
- What is its position on undocumented immigrants?
- What actions has it taken on behalf of undocumented immigrants? When did it take those actions? What were the results?

READING

The Experiences of Undocumented Workers

At least six in 10 farmworkers in the United States are immigrants who came to this country without legal status. Their lives are difficult. First, they make the wrenching decision to leave their homes to escape poverty and make a better life. Then, they make a treacherous journey that could as easily end with injury, deportation or death as with a job north of the border. Once they arrive, they take jobs in agriculture and food processing—jobs that pay well below the minimum wage. They often work in dangerous conditions, endure harassment from bosses and sometimes don't even get paid for the work they do. Their work, though, is essential to the American economy and to bringing food to our plates. Despite all that, many Americans see them as caricatures—lazy people who come here looking for a handout. Nothing could be further from the truth. To get a better sense of their experiences, read these stories of women who live in the United States and work in the food industry here.

Yazmin

To survive the crossing into the United States, Yazmin, 27, scooped water off the ground. Yazmin, then only 16, walked four days and four nights through the mountainous terrain near Tijuana, a journey that cost her \$1,600 in fees paid to the coyotes who guided her. “We were drinking water from ditches. Who knows if it was clean?”

When they reached California, Yazmin found work picking tomatoes, melons, cucumbers and chili peppers. “I’ve always worked,” she says. She didn’t stay on the West Coast long. Instead, she accompanied her father and brother to Florida, where they hoped to find a measure of prosperity.

Soon, however, Yazmin was initiated into the dark side of the immigrant experience. At an age when many teenagers are looking forward to a prom or college, Yazmin baked for long hours beneath the Florida sun while a supervisor stood over her stooped back, spewing out obscenities and insults.

“He mistreated us and said bad things. He would say horrible things, that we weren’t worth a [thing], very strong vulgar words. He would insult us, and he said that ‘broads’ were only good for cranking out kids. Really ugly. Then he fired me.”

Her next manager sought to squeeze as much labor out of his fieldworkers as possible. He would not permit any breaks, even for a drink of water. “I asked him for some water to drink. He said no, that there wasn’t any ... and for me to keep working.” When she complained, he silenced her by threatening to call immigration authorities.

“That’s where being illegal affects us a lot,” she says. “There are bosses who insult you, or they want to sleep with you because they’re bosses.”

A timid young woman, Yazmin did not speak out when the harassment grew worse with each job. One supervisor would physically restrain his workers, grabbing them by the head when he grew angry. Another manager would find ways to brush up against Yazmin when she was nearby.

“Unfortunately, many people are afraid to report [such incidents] because we’re illegal.”

Still not in the United States a full year, Yazmin had to fight off a sexual assault after accepting a car ride to work one day. “That man tried to rape me in his truck. He was touching me, and I asked him why he was doing that.”

The man threatened Yazmin. If she told anyone, he would see to it that she lost her job picking watermelons. Frightened, she did not seek out authorities. But Yazmin’s teenage innocence was shattered.

She was still just 16 years old. “I had never been intimate with anyone. And he touched me, and I had to put up with it. That was a bad experience because I couldn’t find a way out. I didn’t feel safe enough to tell someone.”

After four months, she left that job. Yazmin eventually got married and had three children. But she remained in the fields—ignoring the filthy bathroom facilities, the haze of pesticides that engulfed her from time to time and, worst of all, the constant menace of sexual harassment.

She’s conscious of the contribution she’s making to the U.S. economy and to our tables. But this contribution—her backbreaking labor in return for poverty wages—does little to improve her situation. She lives in constant fear. She is afraid of being arrested, of being separated from her children, of working for someone who will hurt her.

For an undocumented immigrant, “I think there’s more risk and not much safety.”

Margot, Carina and Catalina

Margot is a 19-year-old farmworker from Mexico who came to the United States at 14. She and her husband work seven months in Florida, then migrate to North Carolina and New Jersey as the crops there ripen. “If we stayed here [in Florida], we wouldn’t make enough money because there’s not enough work,” she says.

Each morning, she leaves her two children—a 3-year-old girl and an infant boy—with daycare before starting her long days in the sweltering Florida tomato fields. She says she makes \$2.50 for every tray of grape tomatoes she picks. During a typical 12-hour workday, if she manages to work at full speed under optimal conditions, she can gather as many as a dozen trays, about 300 pounds. That’s \$30 a day—far less than she would earn if paid the minimum wage of \$7.25 an hour. Her one-day tomato harvest retails for as much as \$1,000.

Conditions, of course, are never optimal. Employers “do what they want with you,” Margot says. “They mistreat you. When you’re working, you know how many trays you filled, but then the full amount of trays isn’t on your check.”

Carina, a 24-year-old Mexican woman who began working the Florida fields a decade ago as a 14-year-old girl, says she was told by a crew leader that she would earn \$6 for every box of

green beans she picked. She worked seven days a week and kept track of the boxes she turned in. “At \$6, it comes out to be \$380 or \$400,” she says. “When you get your check, it’s for \$250. And we go and tell the crew leader. He says, ‘I don’t know.’”

She hears the same words told to others in her situation: “There are many people who need work, and if you want to work, fine. And if not, fine.”

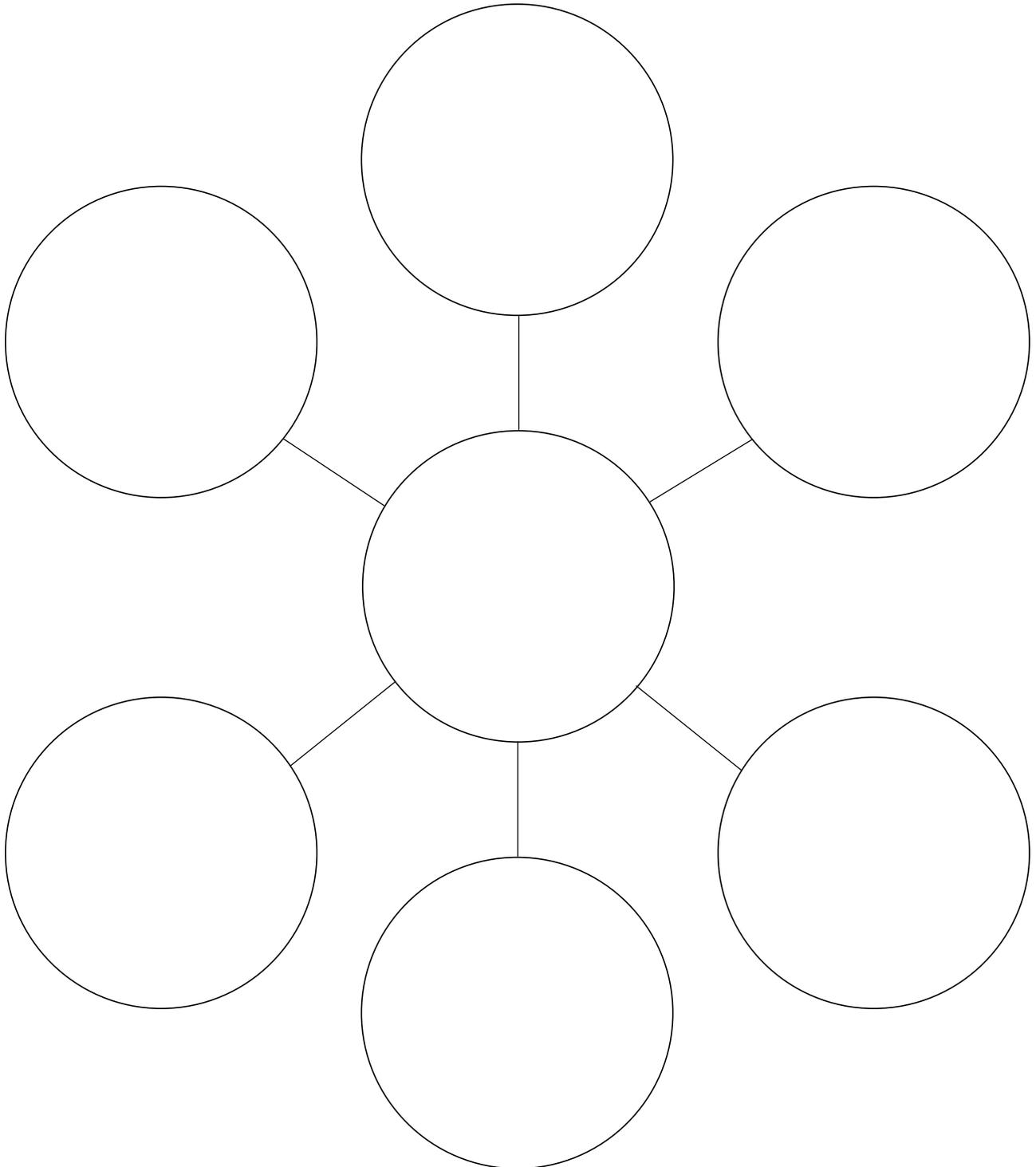
Catalina, a 33-year-old Guatemalan who left three children behind in her homeland to work in Florida four years ago, says she doesn’t complain when she gets shortchanged “because I need to work and I don’t have papers.”

Women like Margot, Carina and Catalina make up about 20 percent of agricultural fieldworkers in the United States. They often find themselves subject to discrimination by employers who prefer male workers. It is not uncommon for them to experience pregnancy discrimination and to receive less favorable opportunities or work assignments than their male counterparts. They are often given fewer opportunities for advancement. They are assigned to the lowest-paying jobs. And they are typically the first to be laid off. Employers are keenly aware of the women’s desperation to get and keep their jobs, which makes them easy prey.

Like many others, Catalina doesn’t always understand how her pay is calculated. But she knows not to question her bosses.

“Yesterday, I did two [900-pound] tubs [of oranges] at \$10, because the trees are so bad there’s no fruit,” Catalina says. “So I earned \$20. But when you get the pay stub, it says eight hours. But they didn’t pay us for eight hours. I’m better off keeping quiet, even if they pay me \$20 or \$30. What can I do? They give me work. That’s what I want. I don’t want anything more. If someone wants to rob me, let them rob me. Only God knows, and God will help me. That’s all I can say.”

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