



LAYER THE WALLS

GOLDINE'S
STORY

QUESTIONS

- What are reasons you know of that people immigrated to the United States in the late 1800's?
- What do you think were the challenges for immigrants in New York City when they came to America in the late 1800's?
- Goldine and Ruth worked in a factory with poor working conditions. What were those conditions and how did women like them fight to change the laws and rules for workers in the future?
- Why do you think our country has had different immigration laws over time? What might impact changes to those laws?
- What kind of immigration laws would you put in place if you were an elected official?



IMMIGRATION THEN AND NOW

LATE 1800S–EARLY 1900S

THE ARRIVAL

Immigrants entered the United States through various ports. Those from Europe entered from the East Coast and those from Asia entered the United States from the West Coast. The main East Coast port of entry after 1892 was Ellis Island in New York Harbor near the Statue of Liberty. More than 12 million immigrants entered through Ellis Island from 1892-1954.

REASONS FOR LEAVING HOME

Immigrants came to America fleeing religious and political persecution, famine, poverty, rising taxes, land and job shortages, and war.

WHERE TRAVELING FROM

By 1840, the majority of European immigrants (almost half) came from Ireland fleeing famine. Also coming in large numbers were Italians and Jews from Eastern Europe.

U.S. IMMIGRATION LAWS

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was one of the first pieces of legislation or laws that imposed restrictions on immigration. It was aimed at Chinese laborers coming to America.

In 1917, Congress passed legislation requiring immigrants of 16 to pass a literacy test.

The Immigration Act of 1924 restricted the amount of people who could come from each country.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS

Immigrants faced harsh discrimination from those living in America based on race, nationality and religion. It was hard for immigrants to find work, fair wages, housing, and safe working conditions.

MODERN DAY

THE ARRIVAL

Immigrants arrive to America by land, air and sea. Immigrants coming to the United States legally have several methods of doing so including obtaining a visa such as a family-based visa or employment-based visa or seeking asylum from religious or political persecution. These policies constantly shift depending on decisions made by the President and Congress.

REASONS FOR LEAVING HOME

Immigrants come to America fleeing religious and political persecution, poverty, lack of work, and war.

WHERE TRAVELING FROM

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 43.1 million immigrants were living in the United States as of 2016 which comprises of 13.5 percent of the population. The majority of immigrants arrive from Latin America followed by Asia and Europe. Mexico has the largest amount of immigration from a single country.

U.S. IMMIGRATION LAWS

Laws and legislation around immigration have been in flux since the mid-1900's.

In 1965, Congress passed a law that stopped limiting how many people could come from each country, doing away with quotas.

In 1976 & 1978, the U.S. allowed a total immigration of 290,000 per year and 20,000 from any single country.

In 1986, Congress passed immigration reform that included a requirement of "English proficiency and knowledge of U.S. history" to become a legal resident, and increased border enforcement.

In 1990, Congress altered the laws and increased the annual immigration limit from 290,000 to 675,000 people annually, plus an addition 125,000 for refugees.

Today, immigrants seeking to come to the U.S. legally need to pass a criminal background check and can be denied permanent residence for reasons including lack of vaccinations, drug abuse or addiction, disease that poses a public health risk or are likely to become a burden to taxpayers. At the time of this writing stricter restrictions are being enforced based on nationality, religion and country of origin.

ATTITUDES TOWARDS IMMIGRANTS

Immigrants today face discrimination from those living in America based on race, nationality, and religion. This poses challenges for immigrants to find work, fair wages, housing, a quality education, and healthcare.

NOT A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS

America is often referred to as a “land of immigrants”. Have you heard this?

And it’s true right? Haven’t many immigrants come to the US? Isn’t that what Layer the Walls is about? Well yes and no.

Yes, there are many immigrants and descendents of immigrants who are American citizens. And those stories and people are important.

But statements about the US being a land of immigrants do not tell the full story and erase people’s stories. This country includes many people who did not come here as immigrants and their stories are important too.

Let’s start with the definition of an immigrant: **An immigrant is someone who makes a conscious decision to leave their home and move to a foreign country with the intention of settling there.**

Can you think of any situations when someone might not fit that description?

- For hundreds of years African people were enslaved, kidnapped, and forcibly brought to this land. This was not a form of immigration.
 - When European colonizers arrived, Native people had been living here for thousands of years, they were not immigrants. When the United States enacted a forced migration of Native people from one region to another, this was not immigration.
 - Refugees are forced to flee their homes because of violence or persecution, often without notice. They are not considered immigrants and often can never safely return to their homeland, even for a visit.
-

So, while the United States has been shaped by a rich history of immigration, there are many other narratives that need to be heard and honored so that we can more fully understand our past, present and future.

There is much more to learn about our complex history and ideas discussed above. Please keep discussing and learning more about these ideas.

THE TENEMENTS



INTERESTING FACTS

- Many immigrants in NYC lived in the tenements of the Lower East Side. By 1900, 2.3 million people were living in these tenements. The Lower East Side was once the most densely populated place in the world.
- Often, dozens of people lived together in each room which was unventilated and dark. These created unsafe conditions and aided in the spread of disease.
- Tenement living was hard! No elevator for your fifth floor walkup; poor lighting on the dark stairs made it easy to fall, and by the time of Goldine's story she would have had to share one toilet with the entire floor of families.
- There was so little space in the crowded apartments, so often, people would hang out on the fire escape like Goldine and Ruth.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU!

- What do you think would be the most challenging thing for you if you lived in the tenements? Where do you think you could go for your private space?

DISCOVER MORE

- Jacob Riis, a photographer at the time, photographed the horrid conditions in the tenements. He published these images in book called *How The Other Half Lives*. Google the images and see for yourself!

EXPLORING GOLDINE'S STORY: THE WOMEN'S LABOR MOVEMENT

When we hear about the Women's Labor Movement we might get it confused with Women's Suffrage, which would be understandable. Both occurred at the same time and both dealt with women's rights and resisting the stereotype that a woman's place was in the home. Women's Suffrage was a movement that focused on a women's right to vote. The Women's Labor Movement focused on fair wages, equal pay and safe working conditions.

The late 1800's saw the end of the Industrial Revolution and moved toward big companies with a focus on mass production: making a lot of things as fast as possible. Women, especially immigrant women, were entering the workforce in droves but because of their immigrant status (plus being a woman) they were subjected to unfair treatment. Imagine, working fourteen hours a day, six days a week, short breaks (or no breaks at all), dangerous conditions, no windows, low pay.... these were just some of the challenges they faced.

They knew that they were being treated unfairly so many of the young female textile works began to protest and strike. The women organized and formed groups like the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in 1900 formed from seven local unions. In 1903, The Women's Trade Union League was founded and became the first national association dedicated to organizing women workers.

In 1909-1910 young women in New York's shirtwaist industry organized The Great Uprising (also called the Uprising of the 20,000). Angered by long hours, low wages, workplace safety issues and workplace abuses from managers and owners, 20,000 (mostly Jewish and Yiddish-speaking immigrants) took to the streets. But striking wasn't easy. Many of these women faced threat of arrest, harassment and personal injury, not to mention the loss of wages from not working, which was a hardship on the families reliant on their income to survive. The strike lasted 11 weeks, during the cold months of November - February, and resulted in many factories agreeing to changing their policies including, fifty-two hour weeks, four paid holidays with pay and better wages.

Unfortunately, not every company agreed to these changes, one of them being the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory made famous by the horrific fire that killed 146 young immigrant women, some as young as 12 years old. It was this event that prompted further changes in the labor movement that we still see today.



QUESTIONS



- Why do you think Goldine decided to continue to strike?
- Goldine had to stand outside in the cold for 3 ½ months to continue to strike.
Is there a topic or cause that you believe in that you would endure standing outside in the cold?
- Do you know that the Triangle Shirtwaist building still stands today? Check out the work this group is doing to establish a monument to honor those women and girls who lost their lives. <http://rememberthetrianglefire.org/>

MESSAGES AND DREAMS

Part One: Secret Message

In the factories, the workers were not allowed to talk to each other, so they had to get creative in finding ways to communicate and pass along information and secrets.



Pretend you are a worker in the factory just like Goldine or Ruth. You have a secret you want to pass along to a friend who is also in the factory. Write that secret in the space below. This secret might be about something the boss is doing that is unfair, what you are thinking about in regards to the strike, information about the union or something else.

Without speaking, find a way to communicate the meaning of your message. Some ways you can do this is by:

- Using your body and hands only (pantomime)
- Writing a note • Writing in code • Draw a picture • Sign language

Part Two: Draw Your Dream

Goldine dreams of a place far away where there is plenty of food and the rent is paid.

Where do you dream of going? _____

What would be there? _____

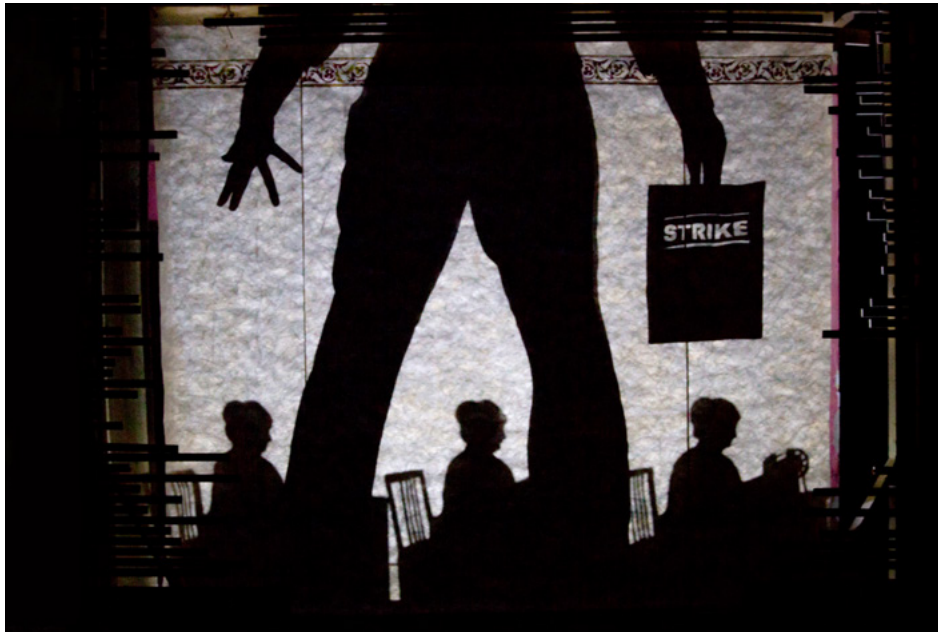
What would you do there? _____

Choose one:

- Draw a picture of this place.
- Cut out pictures from magazines and newspapers. Create a vision board of your dream place.

PANTOMIME

Pantomime is acting with your body and not your voice. Since we can't be in the factory with Goldine and Ruth, and factories today look a little different, pantomiming what they do can help us understand the difficulties of their work.



1.) Imagine you are in a crowded, dark room without windows. You have been huddled over a sewing machine for 10 hours without a proper break. You still have 4 hours to go until you are done for the day. Would you be moving fast or slow? You might be tired but still the boss yells at you to go faster. Let's try acting this out.

2.) Sew a dress with a sewing machine. If you don't know what that looks like, watch this video on how to use a sewing machine from the early 1900s. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thwNiSlMM6I> Copy some of the steps you have to do like threading the machine and using the pedal.

3.) Now try to do it again but faster. Can you be as careful? Do you prick your finger on the needle?

4.) Now go as fast as you can. Is it easy? Do you do as good of a job? How can you do this when you are exhausted?

Bonus: Try finger knitting <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsZsUBYU0qU>. It's different than sewing, but also something that takes careful skill to do well. Once you get the hang of it try it faster and faster. Is it easier that way or harder? Do you do a better job when you are working quickly or when you take your time? Answering these questions might give you a glimpse into Goldine and Ruth's life.

MAKE A BANNER

A banner helps protestors get their message across. When Goldine, Ruth and the other women decided to protest for better working conditions, they carried a banner to show what they wanted. "Fair Working Conditions!" "We Shall Fight Until We Win!"



Create your own banner:

Step One:

Imagine you are Goldine, Ruth or another factory worker.

Step Two:

Think about a short, once sentence phrase you can use to persuade people to make the change you want.

Step Three:

On a piece of paper, cardboard or poster board write your statement in big, bold letters.

Step Four:

You can add color or add decorations to make it eye catching.

WHAT DOES THE BIRD SAY?

In Goldine and Ruth's story, a bird comes to the factory window and visits Goldine on her fire escape. While we know that birds can't talk, we can imagine the bird has something to say and has feelings and wants. Giving the bird human qualities and traits is called *personification*.



Imagine you are the bird. What do you think the bird is saying?

Choose one:

- Write a 5-10 sentence monologue of what the bird might be saying to Goldine, the girls in the factory or the boss (or a combination of these three).
- Write a poem from the point of view of the bird.
- Write a song from the point of view of the bird and sing it.

MODERN CONNECTIONS

Goldine decided to stand up for her rights and demand safer worker conditions. What would you stand up for in the current world? In the space below write a letter to Goldine and explain to what you believe in, why you are taking a stand, and how it impacts you.



Dear Goldine,

I believe _____

I am taking a stand because

MAKE YOUR OWN BIRD SHADOW PUPPET

Step One:

Cut out the bird and the wing along the solid line. You will have two separate pieces.

Step Two:

Tape the bird wing to the bird body.

Step Three:

Roll the bird wings so they are curled and not flat.

Step Four:

Tape the bird to a pencil/pen, plastic utensil, skewer or any other rod like item you have at home.

Step Five:

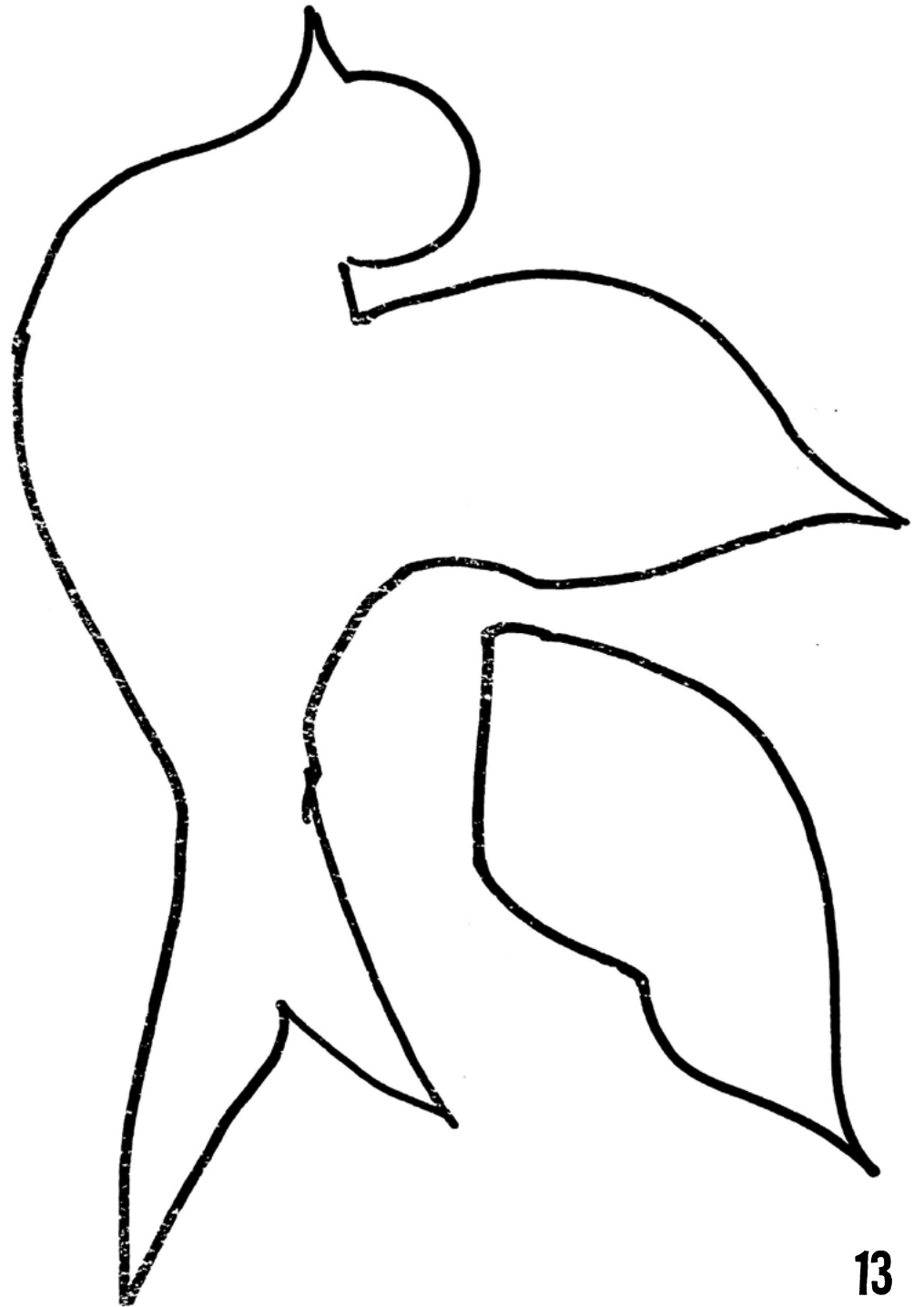
Find a light source (flashlight, cell phone flashlight) to shine on the wall and practice with your bird. Try the following:

Make a figure 8 motion with your wrist so bird looks like it's flying.

Move bird close to the light to make it bigger.

Move bird far from the light to make it smaller.

Include your own hand in the shadow. Can you pet the bird or feed the bird. Where does your hand need to be to look good in the shadow image? (Hint: your hand might not actually need to touch bird)



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