



LAYER THE WALLS

MARCO'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?
- Marco went out in the dangerous blizzard despite warnings from his brother, Lorenzo. Why was it so important for him to try to sell his papers? What was at stake for him and many immigrants like him?
- 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.
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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; during Marco's story there would have been latrines in the backyard.
- Even in these tiny apartments people took on boarders (for example, Marco & Lorenzo were boarders living in Mrs. Bellantoni's apartment) who paid rent to live in a corner of the room.

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!

MARCO'S SURVIVAL IN THE GREAT BLIZZARD OF 1888

When we think of blizzards, we think of roaring winds, snow that slaps your face and piles several feet high. We can hear the howling of the wind and the rumbling against the houses and the bare tree branches outside. We think of the sledding we can do the next day and school being cancelled! We also think of winter storms in December, January and February. But the Great Blizzard of 1888 happened later, on March 11, 1888.

Imagine, thinking that winter has passed and expecting spring flowers to bloom any day. Maybe you smell the grass growing or begin sneezing from those seasonal allergies. Well, before iPhones, computers or television could tell us what weather was coming, our experiences and observations were the greatest indicator on what each day would be like. So imagine what a surprise it must have been when one of the worst blizzards ever recorded happened when everyone was least expecting it...and without warning!!!!

The day before the blizzard, March 10, 1888, the weather was in the mid-50s. But on March 11, the temperatures dropped and the

weather dumped 55 inches of snow (4 feet, 7 inches, the height of many second and third graders!) on the northeast including Washington D.C., New Jersey and New York City.

Despite the storm, many New Yorkers still tried to go to work, not know just how bad the storm was going to get. Many got stranded at train stations, on elevated platforms and away from their homes and had to wait until the storm passed before returning to their families. In 1888, trains, telegraph lines, water mains and gas lines were all above ground. Everything froze and could not be accessed or repaired by work crews. This meant that New Yorkers didn't have water, heat or any way to communicate or leave because of frozen lines. New Yorkers were stranded in their own homes.

In the end, the storm claimed 400 lives, over 200 of them in New York City. The storm and the resulting loss of life prompted many changes that we still see today. Gas and water lines, many electrical and phone wires and subways are located below ground (not above) as a result of this storm.



LETTER WRITING

In the play, Marco gets a job selling newspapers. During this time, it was not uncommon for young children to have a job instead of going to school.

This is an actual image from the 1880's of a young boy selling newspapers. Take a look at the image and think about what it would have felt like to:

- Sell papers all day?
- Stand outside in the rain and cold?
- Make money and support your family?

Now write a letter from Marco to his family back in Sicily. Use the photograph to help you describe what selling newspapers is like.



Dear _____

You will not believe what life is like here. Every day I ...

MAKE A SNOWFLAKE



Every snowflake is unique just like every person is unique. Both Marco and Lorenzo have unique stories about their success in America and the challenges they overcame, especially during the storm of 1888.

Step 1:

Follow this link on how to make a paper snowflake.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLiCV5z-9fA> or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCuk8E-MhdE>

Step 2:

Once you have made your snowflake, on one side write about some hard challenges you've had to overcome. For example you might write, 'riding a two wheeler' or 'learning to read' or 'moving to a new school.',

Step 3:

Decorate the other side of the snowflake with crayon/markers, glitter or other crafts if you wish.

Step 4:

Hang up your snowflake to remind yourself that you can do things even when they are hard, just like Marco and Lorenzo.



PANTOMIME A DAY IN THE LIFE OF RENZO AND MARCO



Pantomime is when you act something out with your body and not your voice. Since we can't be there in person to teach you what a pantomime looks like, watch this video as an example:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jw2tFgBEoac>

and this funny example:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPMBV3rd_hI

Imagine what Renzo and Marco's life was like and pantomime the different activities and events in their life.

- Sleeping in an uncomfortable chair.
- Trying to step over the critters and cockroaches in the apartment
- Going to work for the first time and getting lost.
- Selling a newspaper
- Getting caught in a blizzard with no coat

THE COMPASS



Your Object

Marco keeps a compass in his pocket. The compass is very important to him because it is from his father, it reminds him of his country which he has left and it guides him to safety.

What's an object that's important to you? This might be something someone gave you, you found, or you made. *We challenge you to find something meaningful that is not a cell phone or electronic device.*

Tell the story of that object:

Where did you get that object? _____

Was it given to you or did you find it? _____

Why is this object special to you? _____

Did this object belong to someone else before it was given to you? _____

Did you ever lose this object and then find it again? _____

Draw a picture to accompany your story.

Bonus Science Experiment: Make a compass

Did you know that you can make a compass at home? All you need are some supplies like a magnet and a needle or paper clip. Look at this tutorial and video so you can do it on your own. <https://www.steampoweredfamily.com/activities/how-to-make-a-compass/>

YOUR RECORD



A record is the best you've ever done something. Lorenzo caught the biggest fish. Marco used his compass to save lives.

Choose one:

Part 1: What is your record? OR What would you like your record to be?

Write a few sentences about your record or what you would like your record to be.

Part 2: Create a medal, trophy or certificate to celebrate your record. Here's a video on how to make a medal.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_bKAuDKeM Here's a video on how to make a trophy. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fpyau5X5Q1E>

Bonus Option: "before "Create a medal

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