

# American History Unit One

## Immigration, Multi-Cultural Identity, and the American Dream

“America” from *West Side Story*



Puerto Rico, my heart's devotion,  
Let it sink back in the Ocean.  
Always the hurricanes blowing,  
Always the population growing,  
And the money owing,  
And the sunlight streaming,  
And the Natives steaming.

I like the isle of Manhattan (I know you do!),  
Smoke on your pipe and forget it.

I like to be in America, ok by me in America.

Everything free in America; for a small fee in America.

Buying on credit is so nice; one look at us and they charge twice.

I got my own washing machine; what will you have though to keep clean?

Skyscraper boom in America, Cadillacs zoom in America,

Industry boom in America; twelve in a room in America.

Lots of new housing with more space; lots of doors slamming in our face.

I'll get a terrace apartment; better get rid of your accent.

Life can be bright in America, if you can fight in America.

Life is alright in America, if you're a white in America.

Here you are free and you have pride; as long as you stay on your own side.

Free to be anything you choose; free to wait tables and shine shoes.

Everywhere crime in America, organized crime in America

Terrible time in America; you forget I'm in America.

I think I go back to San Juan; I know a boat you can get on (bye, bye),

Everyone there will give big cheer; everyone there will have moved here!

**Background:** Most people have dreams for their lives. What are yours? As a people, do we as Americans have some special dreams different from those of the German, Japanese, Irish, Mexican or others? If so, what is the American Dream? This is a central question that will occupy our attention during the year. We will be trying to learn more about the development of the American identity and the ways that this identity has been portrayed in literature and the arts. In this first unit, we will also study the ethnic mixture of our nation and the impact that immigration has had on our society. As we will find, many immigrants came to the United States to follow or fulfill personal dreams or to escape a variety of nightmares or problems in other lands. The country that has resulted can be defined today as either a “melting pot” or a “salad bowl” in a multi-cultural society.

The following state standards apply to this unit:

- Analyze ways in which federalism protects individual rights and promotes the common good and how at times has made it possible for states to protect and deny rights for certain groups. 14.A.5
- Describe roles and influences of individuals, groups and media in shaping current Illinois and United States public policy. 14.C.3
- Interpret a variety of public policies and issues from the perspectives of different individuals and groups. 14.D.5
- Analyze historical trends of United States foreign policy. 14.E.4
- Determine the historical events and processes that brought about changes in United States political ideas and traditions. 14.F.4a
- Describe how the United States' political ideas, practices and technologies have extended rights for Americans in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. 14.F.4b
- Analyze and report historical events to determine cause and effect relationships. 16.A.4a
- Make inferences about historical events and eras using historical maps and other historical sources. 16.A.3b
- Analyze how United States political history has been influenced by the nation's economic, social and environmental history. 16.B.5b
- Identify the origins and analyze consequences of events that have shaped world social history including famines, migrations, plagues, slave trading. 16.D.3
- Analyze major contemporary cultural exchanges as influenced by worldwide communications. 18.C.4b
- Read with understanding and fluency. S.G. 1
- Read and understand literature representative of various societies, eras, and ideas. S.G. 2
- Write to communicate for a variety of purposes. S.G. 3
- Listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations. S.G. 4
- Use the language arts to acquire, assess, and communicate information. S.G. 5

**Focus Questions:** What is an American? What is the American Dream? Is it accessible to all? What are the costs of becoming an American? How do I contribute to an American Society so everyone can achieve his or her American dream?



**Content Objectives:** At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- A. Identify the motivating factors that have caused a wide variety of ethnic groups to immigrate to the United States, as seen in the literature selections and historical documents/primary sources.  
*The Americans*, pp. 460-462
- B. Identify the ethnic groups, which comprise the "Old Immigration" and the "New Immigration" and use text, map, and chart materials to analyze the fundamental differences between these groups.  
*The Americans*, pp. 263-264, 460-461, 494-495
- C. Describe the difficulties faced by immigrants to the United States in becoming assimilated into the United States' culture, as shown in both fiction and non-fiction sources.  
*The Americans*, pp. 461-465, 468-469, 472, Web Quest, Films

D. Evaluate the specific methods used to restrict immigration to the United States and the motives for these restriction measures throughout American history including recent laws as well.

*The Americans*, pp. 319, 464-465, 495, 618, 620-623, 896

Web Quest

E. Identify the ethnic groups, which constituted the large wave of immigration to the United States since 1965 (the recent or “New, New Immigrants”) and evaluate how this has changed our nation.

*The Americans*, pp. 868, 890-891, 897, 974-975, 1050, 1091-1092

F. “Should the United States continue to welcome people from other lands or do we need to restrict immigration?” Analyze current immigration reforms being legislated on in Congress and discuss their possible impact on future of immigration, through an organized debate/discussion.

*The Americans*, pp. 1092, 1094-1095, 1102-1103

**Assessments for and of learning:** At the end of this unit, you will demonstrate your knowledge through a variety of assessments that may include the following:

G. Chronology: Create a timeline of several key events related to the unit and be able to explain the significance of events on the timeline.

H. Graph/Chart Interpretation: Use statistical data from graphs and charts to analyze important trends in American immigration.

I. Library Research or Oral History: Use library sources to identify the experiences of various ethnic groups who have come to the United States and to understand the contributions that they have made to American society. OR, trace your own family’s immigrant experiences and relate these to our study in class.

J. Analyze and Interpret selected readings reflecting immigration experiences of various ethnic groups.

K. Begin learning to interpret and respond to various DBQs, using selected charts, graphs, illustrations, readings, quotes, and maps in relation to the unit subject material.

L. Debate: See objective F above

M. The American Dream Research Project: Develop a personal definition of the concept of the “American dream” and compare it to the vision of the America dream presented in literary and historical selections in this unit.

N. Writing: Prepare a well-organized essay answer to one of the topics listed below or a topic chosen by your teacher:

1. “On what basis, if any, should the government restrict immigration to the United States today? What can the government do to solve major problems of immigration today?” Create your own “law” to answer this question. Present it in class.
2. “Should the goal of the American people be the encouragement of a ‘melting pot’ society or a ‘salad bowl’ society? Should the cultural differences between ethnic groups be eliminated or should they be accepted as important elements of American culture?”

O. One Unit Exam: Multiple Choice and short essay questions.

**Important Names and Terms:** You should be able to identify the following names and terms and explain how each is important to the unit. Look for possible relationships between the names and the terms:

Old Immigration	“Salad Bowl”	quota system
New Immigration	Melting Pot	Gentleman’s Agreement
Assimilation	Chinese Exclusion Act	naturalization
W.A.S.P.	Jane Addams	Ellis Island
Know-Nothing Party	Angel Island	alien
Nativism	refugee	xenophobia