Did the American Dream Come True for Immigrants Who Came to New York?

Supporting Questions

1. Why did people move to New York and what were their hopes?
2. What was life like for immigrants in New York?
3. How did immigrant groups adapt to and shape the culture of New York?

4th Grade Immigration Inquiry

Did the American Dream Come True for Immigrants Who Came to New York?

New York State Social Studies Framework
Key Idea & Practices

4.7 IMMIGRATION AND MIGRATION FROM THE EARLY 1800S TO THE PRESENT: Many people have immigrated and migrated to New York State, contributing to its cultural growth and development.

- Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence
- Chronological Reasoning and Causation
- Comparison and Contextualization
- Civic Participation

Staging the Question
Read aloud Emma Lazarus’s poem “The New Colossus” and brainstorm why she wrote it.

Supporting Question 1
Why did people move to New York and what were their hopes?

Formative Performance Task
List the reasons people immigrated to New York.

Featured Sources
Source A: Source bank: Immigrant experiences coming to New York

Supporting Question 2
Research Opportunity
What was life like for immigrants in New York?

Formative Performance Task
Write a paragraph describing the experiences of immigrants upon arrival in New York.

Featured Sources
Source A: Source bank: Immigrant experiences settling in New York
Source B: Image bank: Working conditions

Supporting Question 3
Research Opportunity
How did immigrant groups adapt to and shape the culture of New York?

Formative Performance Task
Make a claim with evidence about how three immigrant groups adapted to and shaped the culture of New York.

Featured Source
Source A: “Immigration”

Summative Performance Task
ARGUMENT Did the American Dream come true for immigrants in New York? Construct an argument supported with evidence that addresses the question of whether or not the American Dream came true for immigrants in New York.

EXTENSION Participate in a class discussion about the whether or not the American Dream continues to uphold the same meaning for present-day New Yorkers.

Taking Informed Action
UNDERSTAND Identify a prominent immigrant group in the local community or region.
ASSESS Research and assess the experiences of the selected immigrant group.
ACT Use the research to create a digital information session for children emigrating to their community.
Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of the experiences faced by immigrant groups who traveled to New York throughout the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Understanding those experiences helps students develop keen insights into the cultural fabric of New York State. In examining the initial hopes of immigrants and their reasons for coming to America, the social and economic conditions in New York City at the time, and the realities of establishing a new life for immigrant families, students should be able to develop an argument with evidence to answer the compelling question "Did the American Dream come true for immigrants who came to New York?"

In addition to the Key Idea listed earlier, this inquiry highlights the following Conceptual Understanding:

- (4.7a) Immigrants came to New York State for a variety of reasons. Many immigrants arriving in New York City were greeted by the sight of the Statue of Liberty and were processed through Ellis Island.

NOTE: This inquiry is expected to take four to six 30-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame might expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries to meet the requirements and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “Did the American Dream come true for immigrants who came to New York?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument with evidence and counterevidence from a variety of sources.

Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question “Did the American Dream come true for immigrants who came to New York?” teachers might begin by reading aloud Emma Lazarus’s poem “The New Colossus” and asking students to brainstorm why she wrote it.
Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“Why did people move to New York and what were their hopes?”—helps students explore the reasons people chose to leave their countries of origin in search of a new life in New York. The formative performance task asks students to complete a graphic organizer in which they list the motivations and aspirations of immigrants to the United States. The featured sources supporting this task—a video and an interactive website—present examples of why people emigrated from their homelands and why they chose to come to the United States.

Supporting Question 2

For the second supporting question—“What was life like for immigrants in New York?”—students build on their understandings of the rationales for migration and the experiences of those arriving at Ellis Island as they begin thinking about whether the dreams of immigrants were illusions or reality. The formative performance task challenges students to write a description of the experiences of immigrants working to establish new lives for themselves and their families in New York. The featured sources, which include source and image banks, present information about the social conditions encountered by many immigrants living in tenements and the economic experiences of many immigrants joining the workforce.

NOTE: Teachers may want to replay portions of the video and have students return to the interactive website from Featured Source 1A to address the formative performance task for this supporting question.

Supporting Question 3

In addressing the third supporting question—“How did immigrant groups adapt to and shape the culture of New York?”—students further their explorations of immigration by analyzing the ways in which immigrant groups assimilated into and contributed to the culture of New York. The formative performance task asks students to make one or more claims with evidence about how three immigrant groups adapted to and shaped the culture of New York (e.g., languages, foods, and customs). The featured source is a Library of Congress website that offers students examples of the ways in which various groups of immigrants adapted to and assimilated into life in the United States. Students can use the navigation panel on the left-hand side of the site to research the experiences of Italian, Irish, German, Polish, and Russian immigrants, as well as others.
Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry students have explored a range of issues around the experiences of immigrants to New York during the mid-1800s to the early 1900s. Students should be able to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students construct an evidence-based argument responding to the compelling question “Did the American Dream come true for all immigrants?” It is important to note that students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a presentation, poster, essay, or a combination of drawing and writing.

Student arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- The American Dream did come true for immigrants in New York because they were able to get jobs and their lives improved.
- The American Dream did come true for immigrants because they were able to escape the problems in their homelands and have a new start.
- The American Dream did not come true for immigrants because they suffered while trying to establish a life in New York.
- The American Dream came true for some immigrants, but most faced many hardships.
- The American Dream came true for immigrants because immigrants were able to bring their cultures together to make New York City what it is today.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by building on their understanding of the experiences faced by many immigrants during the transition to their new lives in New York. To understand that experience, students can identify a prominent immigrant group in their local community or region. In order to assess the experiences of that group, students should engage in research about its history and customs. And to act on their understandings and research, students may develop a digital information session for immigrant children moving into their community.
Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame,
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Supporting Question 1

| Featured Source | Source B: Source bank: Immigrant experiences coming to New York |

**NOTE:** The Scholastic video, Virtual Field Trip to Ellis Island, describes why European immigrants came to New York, their experiences on Ellis Island and after they entered the country, and the conditions immigrants face today. The Interactive Tour of Ellis Island is an interactive website that allows students to virtually explore the experiences of immigrants through stories, audio, video, and photos.

Source 1: A video tour of Ellis Island. The tour is available at:
http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/webcast.htm
Source 2: An interactive website exploring immigrant’s experiences. The website is available at: http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/tour/
Supporting Question 2

| Featured Source | Source A: Source bank: Immigrant experiences settling in New York |

NOTE: The Lower East Side Tenement Museum provides an abundance of information about and activities to explore the immigrant life once they had arrived in America. From Ellis Island to Orchard Street is an interactive website that offers a video of immigrant experiences in coming to New York and the opportunity for students to construct an immigrant character. This website is available at [http://www.tenement.org/immigrate/](http://www.tenement.org/immigrate/).

The Museum also features the Virtual Tour website, which presents text and image descriptions of how immigrant life changed over time by tracing the families who lived in the same apartment. This website is available at [http://www.tenement.org/Virtual_Tour/index_virtual.html](http://www.tenement.org/Virtual_Tour/index_virtual.html).
Supporting Question 2

| Featured Source | Source B: Image bank: Working conditions |

Public domain. Source: Kheel Center Image 5

Image 3: Unknown photographer, photograph of working conditions, no title, circa 1900. Public domain. Kheel Center image 7
http://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/primary/photosIllustrations/slideshow.html?image_id=819&sec_id=8#screen

Image 4: Unknown photographer, photograph of clothing factory, no title, circa 1900. Public domain. Kheel Center image 16
http://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/primary/photosIllustrations/slideshow.html?image_id=819&sec_id=8#screen
NOTE: The screenshot shown here of the Library of Congress website illustrates the introduction to the section on Immigration. Additional classroom resources are available at:
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/introduction2.html

Additional information on immigration is available at: http://kids.pbskids.com/bigapplehistory/index-flash.html