Do good fences make good neighbors?

Supporting Questions

1. Why have people migrated from Mexico to the United States and sometimes returned home?

2. How has Mexican migration to the United States change over the last 50 years?

3. What are the current proposals for a border wall between Mexico and the United States?
### Do good fences make good neighbors?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry Standard</th>
<th>D2.Geo.7.3-5. Explain how cultural and environmental characteristics affect the distribution and movement of people, goods, and ideas.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staging the Compelling Question</strong></td>
<td>Discuss current proposals to expand the border wall between Mexico and the United States.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Supporting Question 1

**Why have people migrated from Mexico to the United States and sometimes returned home?**

**Formative Performance Task**

Make a list of various reasons why people have wanted to migrate from Mexico to the United States and why they have sometimes wanted to leave.

**Featured Sources**

Source A: Mexican Migration Stories

#### Supporting Question 2

**How has Mexican migration to the United States change over the last 50 years?**

**Formative Performance Task**

Make a list of facts about Mexican migration to the United States over the last 50 years.

**Featured Sources**

Source A: Data on Mexican migration to the U.S.

#### Supporting Question 3

**What are the current proposals for a border wall between Mexico and the United States?**

**Formative Performance Task**

Make a claim about whether a new or more extensive border wall is needed between Mexico and the United States.

**Featured Sources**

Source A: Borders and Walls: Do Barriers Deter Unauthorized Migration?

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#### Summative Performance Task

**ARGUMENT**

Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) in response to the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical sources, while acknowledging competing views.

**EXTENSION**

Create a visual depiction of some aspect of the argument

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#### Taking Informed Action

**UNDERSTAND**

Identify and describe the current status of the political debate about a border wall between Mexico and the United States.

**ASSESS**

Consider the options for expressing views on the political debate.

**ACTION**

Organize and participate in a debate about building a wall between Mexico and the United States.
Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry examines the 20th century history of migration from Mexico to the United States and recent efforts to limit the movement of people across the southern U.S. border. The inquiry takes its inspiration from a 2018 podcast episode by Malcom Gladwell titled, “General Chapman's Last Stand.” The podcast is part of Gladwell's Revisionist History series (http://revisionisthistory.com).

In the podcast, Gladwell tells the story of General Leonard F. Chapman Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps during the Vietnam War, who went on to serve as the Commissioner of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) from 1972 to 1975. Chapman is credited with reforming the INS into a more efficient and effective agency, but Gladwell argues that Chapman’s efforts also led to an unintentional increase in unauthorized immigrants.

In 1970, 760,000 Mexican immigrants, or 1.4% of Mexico’s population, lived in the U.S. By 2008, there were 12.7 million Mexican immigrants in the U.S. which amounted to 11% of all people born in Mexico; an increase of almost 800% in less than 30 years. The question of how and why this happened is the central focus of this inquiry.

Structure

This inquiry opens with a compelling question that reflects the ongoing debate about building and expanding a wall between the southwest U.S. and northern Mexico. With this context set, the inquiry focuses on three supporting questions related to the Mexican immigration history and the changes in policies and enforcement at the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, as well as current proposals to curb Mexican immigration.

Students analyze immigration data, explore oral interviews with Mexican immigrants, and review policy proposals for addressing Mexican immigration to the United States. In the summative task, students produce an argument in response to the compelling question, Do good fences make good neighbors? Students’ work on the various tasks in this inquiry to take into account the recent history and changes in U.S. immigration policy.
Staging the Compelling Question

| Compelling Question | Do good fences make good neighbors? |

Staging the compelling question

Much has been made on both sides of the argument about the value and purpose of a border wall between Mexico and the United States. Some see it as a way to limit what they view as unwanted immigration, while others are concerned that over-enforcement of the border will limit the flow of seasonal workers and refugees. All sides seem to be particularly passionate about their positions right now.

In this staging task, students are given an opportunity to talk about what they already know and to surface what they may want to learn about the recent history of Mexican immigration. Teachers may prompt this task with a recent news story or simply by asking students to share what they have heard about proposals to expand the barriers on the Mexican border. The goal with this staging task is to surface students’ prior knowledge, not necessarily to introduce new content. With students’ knowledge activated, they will be well positioned to begin the formative task work.
Supporting Question 1

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<th>Supporting Question</th>
<th>Why have people migrated from Mexico to the United States and sometimes returned home?</th>
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<td>Make a list of various reasons why people have wanted to migrate from Mexico to the United States and why they have sometimes wanted to leave.</td>
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We may sometimes take for granted the reasons for which people migrate; common explanations include the notion that migrants are seeking a better life or perhaps they are escaping danger in their home country. Those push and pull factors have certainly driven migration from Mexico to the United States, but they also tell an incomplete story. This supporting question focuses students’ attention on the dynamic nature of migration. Migration is not a one way street. Yes, people who come to the United States are sometimes seeking a better life or new work, they may be escaping something at home, but they may also be here for short periods of time as seasonal workers, or they may get to the U.S. and regret their decision to migrate. Sometimes migrants are forced to leave through deportation or may choose to leave if things did not work out as they planned.

The reasons for migration are varied as are the resulting patterns in migration. Over the last 50 years more and more Mexicans have migrated to the United States, more and more have chosen to stay in the United States, and more may have felt unwelcome and even threatened in the U.S. This supporting question asks about the complex dynamics that are in play with the increasingly high profile story of Mexican migration to the United States.

Formative Performance Task

This formative performance task examines assumptions about Mexican migration to the United States and provides students with an opportunity to learn about the reasons for Mexican migration to the U. S. from people who have actually migrated. The featured source for this task is a collection of interviews compiled by the Mexican Migration Project (MMP) directed by professors Jorge Durand, at the University of Guadalajara and Douglas S. Massey at Princeton University. The project is one of the most comprehensive efforts to document the complex history of Mexican migration to the United States.

Students examine a collection of 13 stories composed from interviews with migrants and collect information from the stories about why the people being interviewed decided to leave Mexico and what their experience was in like the United States. The interviews were conducted in 1991 and 1992, just at the beginning of a steep increase in Mexican migration that lasted for about 15 years. Each story is 1,000 to 2,000 words long and is written in first person. The stories are organized into three areas -- 1) Border crossings and working; 2) Everyday life and return: and 3) Those who stay. Teachers may use a variety of strategies to assign the text from individual work, to small groups, to jigsaw or even more direct whole group reading and analysis. Each story is unique, so exposure to multiple stories will deepen students knowledge and capacity to complete the formative task.
Supporting Question 1

Featured Source A  
Mexican Migration Stories

Excerpt

This source is a collection of 13 stories that depict why and how Mexicans have migrated to the United States. The stories are written in first person and are very closely based on interviews done with people who came from Mexico to the United States. The interviews were collected in 1991 and 1992 during a period of considerable transition in the patterns of immigration from Mexico to the U.S.

The stories are organized in three sections, 1) Border Crossings and Working; 2) Everyday Life and Return; and 3) Those Who Stay. They may be accessed at http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/expressions/stories-e.. 

Source:
The Mexican Migration Project (MMP) was created in 1982 by an interdisciplinary team of researchers to further our understanding of the complex process of Mexican migration to the United States. The project is a binational research effort co-directed by Jorge Durand, professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Guadalajara (Mexico), and Douglas S. Massey, professor of Sociology and Public Affairs, with a joint appointment in the Woodrow Wilson School, at Princeton University (US).

Supporting Question 2

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Work has always been a central aspect of Mexican migration to the United States. For generations, migrant workers would spend the growing season in the United States and return home to Mexico in the winter. This circular movement of people was facilitated in large part by the minimal security on the border between Mexico and the U.S. In fact, the non-permanent movement of people across national borders or circular migration has a long history and in most places around the world circular migration is on the upswing. But, in North America the trend is in the opposite direction. Instead of circular migration, permeant Mexican immigration to the United States is now the norm.

Formative Performance Task

With this formative performance task, students are able to gather information about migration patterns among Mexicans coming the the United States and examine how those patterns have changed. The featured source is a set of four Pew Hispanic Center research reports that detail the recent history of Mexican migration and show changes in those patterns of migration.

In this formative performance task, students examine these four reports and record facts about Mexican migration. Teachers may want to provide students with a graphic organizer or some additional structure within which to gather information from the reports.
Excerpt

The following three reports detail information about immigration from Mexico to the United States over the last several decades.

1. Facts on U.S. Immigrants, 2015 - Statistical portrait of the foreign-born population in the United States. This report details the overall characteristics of foreign born persons in the United States. The report is available online at [http://www.pewhispanic.org/2017/05/03/facts-on-u-s..](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2017/05/03/facts-on-u-s..).

2. Unauthorized immigrant population trends for states, birth countries and regions. This 2016 report shows the number of unauthorized immigrants by state and country of birth. The report is available online at [http://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthoriz..](http://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/unauthoriz..).

3. Mexican Immigrants in the United States, 2008. This report provides data on the number of Mexican who migrated to the U.S. from 1850 to 2008 along with other data. In combination with the previous source, it shows that immigration from Mexico to the U.S. increased dramatically after 1970 and peaked in about 2007. The report is available online at [http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/04/15/mexican-immi..](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2009/04/15/mexican-immi..).


Source:
Pew Research Center, Hispanic Trends

[http://www.pewhispanic.org](http://www.pewhispanic.org)
Supporting Question 3

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As the conditions and circumstances of Mexican migration have changed over time, the policy discussion has shifted to talk about a border wall. The border between Mexico and the United States runs about 1,900 miles from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. Walls, fences, and other barriers made from concrete, steel and/or wire stands already cover about a third of the border. The question for many today is whether the existing barriers are sufficient or if more is needed.

**Formative Performance Task**

With a good sense of the current border wall and an understanding of the recent history of Mexican migration, students examine policy positions on border security and make a claim about whether the existing walls and fences should be expanded. Students claims should be supported with evidence from the source available in this supporting question and from other sources in this inquiry.

The featured source for this supporting question is an article about the advantages and disadvantages of border barriers from the Migration Project.
Excerpt

Below is an excerpt of the full article available online at [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/borders-an.](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/borders-an).

In 2015, borders and walls seemed to burst onto the global agenda in the context of migration and halting spontaneous movement. Countries as diverse as Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia announced or began work on new border barriers.

At the end of World War II there were fewer than five border walls in the world, according to Élisabeth Vallet, a professor of geography at the University of Québec at Montréal. By the time the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, there were 15. Today, there are nearly 70.

This rush to build new walls raises several questions: Why now? Did border walls work in the past? Do they work today?

Border Walls: A Brief History

For many people, the Great Wall of China represents proof that humans have built border walls for thousands of years and that they are an effective means to protect the population from an outside threat. Reports about border walls today often reference the Great Wall accompanied by an image and a description of the barrier emphasizing its superlative age and length: 2,000 years old and thousands of miles long.

Borders Today: More Movement, More Walls

In the 21st century, the purpose of borders has changed, leading to a surge in construction of border barriers. Unlike in the past, countries now control territories with fixed borders on maps that most other governments in the world have agreed to respect, rendering the use of walls to mark territorial control obsolete.

A Powerful But Expensive Symbol

If walls did not work in the past and today only work to divert, not prevent, migrant flows—while simultaneously having a grave human cost—why have so many gone up in the past 30 years? They are effective as symbols that demonstrate that politicians are doing something to address the perceived threats brought by unauthorized movement.

While these underlying issues are complex and very rarely solved by whether or not a border is secured, "build a wall" is an evocative slogan and the barrier itself is a powerful visual symbol of action. Consequently, despite the expense and questionable effectiveness, it seems likely that in the short term there will be many more walls going up around the world. What remains to be seen, however, is how long they will stay up.

Source:
Migration Policy Institute

Copyright information - [https://www.migrationpolicy.org/about/copyright-po.](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/about/copyright-po.)
Argument

The compelling question asks if fences make good neighbors. It's a play on Robert Frost's 1912 poem, *Mending Wall*. The poem is a polemic against walls and borders, but in this best known refrain, "do fences make good neighbors," Frost sets up an argument by making the case for walls.

This inquiry sees the prospect of border security and "walls" between Mexico and the United States as an open question that is worthy of consideration. Unlike Robert Frost who had a strong position, students should be open to all possibilities.

Students responses will vary and may include some of the following ideas.

- Walls are necessary to slow the flow of migrants so authorities can be certain of who is coming and going.
- Walls make it more difficult to enter the United States from Mexico and even more difficult to leave and come back thereby changing patterns of immigration from circular to one direction.
- Walls are an antithesis to the long history of immigration that has made America what it is today.

Teachers may have students produce a written argument or may want students to construct their argument in other modalities.

Extension

Walls have emotional and psychological dimensions, but in place and time they are physical structures. When thinking about a border wall between Mexico and the United States, visual representations of the wall are never far away. This extension gives students an opportunity to portray their ideas for a wall or their thinking in opposition to a wall using visuals.
**Taking Informed Action**

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<td>Action</td>
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This inquiry is focused on the recent history of an issue that is very present in society. To understand the issue, students should get the latest on political debate about building a wall. Given the current context, students assess how their voice can be heard in this debate and then organize and participate in an actual debate. The debate may take any form, online, face-to-face; small group or something more organized. It is most important that the form of the debate is providing students with the agency to organize and put on the debate.