

# TEACHER GUIDE

## Americans and Their Family Stories

### Grade 5 School Tour



A Program of the Education Department  
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**Skirball**   
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Letter to Teacher .....	3
2. Curriculum Connections.....	5
3. Tour Vocabulary .....	6
4. Quick Prep.....	7
5. Pre- and Post-Visit Activities.....	8
a. In the Classroom .....	9
b. At Home.....	17
c. After the Visit .....	19
6. Recommended Resources .....	20

## Dear Teacher,

We're looking forward to welcoming you to the Skirball Cultural Center for the Americans and Their Family Stories school tour. Through immersive storytelling and hands-on activities, students will explore stories of immigrants from around the world, re-enact the American immigration experience at the turn of the twentieth century, and discover how these experiences relate to their own family stories.

This Teacher's Guide is designed to assist you in the classroom as you prepare students for their Museum visit. The activities will make your visit to the Skirball a more rewarding and enriching experience. All materials are grade-level appropriate, aligned with Common Core and State Standards, and intended to actively engage students in learning; we encourage you to adapt the activities to the specific needs of your class.

### Before the Museum Visit

- Complete the pre-visit activities with your students to introduce them to the major themes of the tour
  - Review the Museum rules and regulations with students and chaperones
  - Prepare a readable nametag for each student
  - If your group is larger than 30 students, please divide them into two even groups, then further divide each half into five smaller groups
- !** If you do not have time for all of the activities, please see the "Quick Prep" information (p. 7) to guide your students through a brief conversation before visiting the Skirball. You can have this discussion the day before or the morning of your visit.

### The Museum Visit

The school tour includes an interactive sixty-minute program in the Skirball's permanent exhibition, *Visions and Values: Jewish Life from Antiquity to America*, and a sixty-minute interactive program in a Skirball classroom. All visits are guided by a team of trained docents and staff educators.

**In the Museum galleries:** Students re-enact the Jewish immigration to America at the turn of the twentieth century. They travel by boat and undergo the inspection process at Ellis Island, attend a public school in 1908, explore life in a tenement, and search for an occupation in the midst of a bustling New York City neighborhood.

**In the Skirball classroom:** Students work in small groups to explore stories of immigrants from around the world by examining heirlooms and personal narratives from different countries, cultures, and time periods. Using their imaginations, students reflect on the challenges and opportunities we face collectively as a nation of immigrants.

### After the Museum Visit

- Tell us about your visit. Please complete this short survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SchoolProgramSurvey>
- Keep the conversation going in your classroom using the activities and resources in this guide or lessons and projects that you design.

- Share student work, drawing, or writing with us! We love to see how teachers are using or adapting the Skirball's school programs and to learn what students felt about or retained from their visit.

Please contact us with any questions at [education@skirball.org](mailto:education@skirball.org).

We look forward to your visit!  
School Programs Staff  
Skirball Cultural Center

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

### Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts

#### Reading: Literature

##### *Key Ideas and Details*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.5.3

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.3

#### *Craft and Structure*

CCSS.ELA

#### Speaking and Listening

##### *Comprehension and Collaboration*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.5.1

### California State English/Language Arts Standards

#### Speaking Applications

2.1

2.2

#### Listening and Speaking Strategies

*Comprehension 1.3*

*Comprehension 1.5*

### California State History and Social Science Standards

5.4.6

### California State Visual and Performing Arts Standards

#### Theater

*Creative Expression 2.1*

*Historical and Cultural Context 3.2*

## TOUR VOCABULARY

These are some of the terms that students may encounter on the tour. Please review any new vocabulary, as you see fit.

**Citizen:** a native or naturalized member of a state or nation who owes allegiance to its government and is entitled to its protection.

**Culture:** the beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place, or time.

**Discrimination:** the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, religion, age, or gender.

**Diversity:** the quality or condition of being different or varied.

**Ellis Island:** an island in New York Harbor, southwest of Manhattan that was the chief immigration station of the United States from 1892 to 1954.

**Heirloom:** a valued family possession handed down from generation to generation.

**Heritage:** something handed down from one's ancestors, or the past, as in a characteristic, a culture, or tradition.

**Immigrant:** a person who leaves his or her own country to live permanently in another.

**Immigration:** a process of leaving one place for the purpose of permanently settling in a different place.

**Judaism:** a religion and a culture that follows rules and traditions based on the Hebrew bible, called the Torah. In the same way that other cultures have special foods, traditions, languages, and values, Jewish people have these unique cultural aspects too. There are Jewish holidays, Jewish foods, Jewish languages, and values that many Jewish people (and many other cultures) try to live by, such as welcoming others, taking care of the earth, and teaching and learning.

**Liberty:** a condition of being free from restriction or control; the right and power to act, believe, or express oneself in a manner of one's own choosing.

**Refugee:** a person who has been forced to leave his/her country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

**Revolution:** the usually violent attempt by many people to end the rule of one government and start a new one.

## QUICK PREP

If you only have time to prepare your class right before the tour (in the classroom or on the bus), use the points below to have a discussion with your students.

- **Students: Where are we going?**

**Teacher:** We are going to the Skirball Cultural Center to learn about immigration stories from all over the world. What is immigration? Brainstorm about the meaning of the word. Immigration is the process of leaving one place to permanently settle in a different place.

- **Students: What will we do when we get to the Skirball?**

**Teacher:** We will learn that America is a country of immigrants from many different parts of the world who are in some ways different from each other, but who also have many experiences in common. **[Note: If comfortable, the teacher might mention when his/her family came to the United States and from where.]**

We will spend about an hour in the Museum galleries, where we will use our imaginations to put ourselves in the place of Jewish immigrants who came to America over 100 years ago. We'll travel by boat to the United States, undergo the inspection process at Ellis Island, attend a public school in 1908, and search for an occupation in the midst of a bustling New York City neighborhood.

We will then spend about an hour in another room at the Skirball, where we will work together in small groups to explore stories of immigrants from around the world. We'll look at family heirlooms and personal stories of people from different countries, cultures, and time periods. We will see that no matter when or where an immigrant comes from, immigrants' stories have many things in common.

- **Students: What do we need to do to make this visit successful?**

**Teacher:** Reinforce the definition of "immigration": Immigration is the process of permanently moving from the country where you were born to another country.

**Ask students to pair-share using the following prompt:** Imagine that you are about to immigrate to a new place. You have a very short time to pack your favorite things. What three things will you pack and why? Be sure to select items that represent you, what you like to do, or what you care about. Share with your partner.

**Encourage students to speak up!** During your trip to the Skirball, you will be using your imaginations, telling stories, asking questions, and sharing experiences. Please don't be shy about speaking up, as everyone is welcome here.

## PRE- AND POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

These activities can be used to introduce and/or reinforce the main themes of the Americans and Their Family Stories tour and actively engage students in exploring these themes. The activities are divided into three sections: those to be completed in the classroom, those to be taken home and completed with the help of family members, and those to be completed after the visit to the Skirball.

### Before the Visit

#### In the Classroom:

- ***Compare and Contrast***  
Using your visual analysis skills, compare and contrast two images in the Skirball's collection. Write a response from the perspective of one of the subjects in the image.
- ***Act It Out!***  
By participating in an imaginative role-playing experience, build listening and speaking skills to become better storytellers.
- ***Exploring History and Immigration***  
Work in small groups to discuss, identify, and analyze the impact of historical events on American immigration.

#### At Home:

- ***My Family's Story***  
Research your family story through conversations with family members and identify a family heirloom. Write and illustrate a five-paragraph essay explaining the story of your own family and the heirloom that remains a symbol of your family story.

### After the Visit

- ***Creative Writing: Your Suitcase***  
Recall stories you explored during your visit to the Skirball. Write an essay based on the themes of the field trip as well as personal experience.



## IN THE CLASSROOM

### COMPARE AND CONTRAST

**Objective:** Students will build their visual analysis skills by comparing and contrasting two images depicting the immigration experience. Through close looking and analysis, students will hone their ability to empathize.

**Tour Connection:** During the tour, students will consider the range of emotions, from sorrow to joy, that immigrants experience.

#### Materials:

- Whiteboard and dry erase markers
- Painting: *The Wanderers* by Peter Krasnow (p. 10)
- Poster: *Food Will Win the War* by Charles Edward Chambers (p. 10)
- Comparison Chart (p. 11)

#### Instructions:

1. Begin with a **brainstorm** about the meaning of the term “immigration.” Use prompts if needed; see below for examples or add your own.
  - What does it mean to “immigrate”?
  - What reasons do people have for immigrating to the United States?
  - What feelings might people experience when leaving their homes?

**Write** students’ responses on the whiteboard.
2. **Divide** students into small groups; each group will assign a note-taker and a reporter.
3. **Display** *The Wanderers* by Peter Krasnow; **hand out** the Comparison Chart to each group and ask students to **discuss** and note responses to each question in the LEFT column.
4. **Display** *Food Will Win the War* by Charles Edward Chambers; ask students to **discuss** the same questions and note their answers in the RIGHT column of the Comparison Chart.
5. Ask groups to **share** their findings with the whole class. After the share-out, go back to the board with the brainstorm activity and ask students to add any new responses. Use a different colored marker to reflect new information acquired about immigration and immigrants’ motivations and emotions during the process.
6. Following the discussion, have each student select one figure in either image to focus on. Each student will write a one-page, first-person account from the point of view of the selected figure. Encourage students to write about what that person might be seeing, hearing, or feeling at that moment in time.



*The Wanderers*  
by Peter Krasnow

Sculptor and painter Peter Krasnow was born in 1887 in the Ukraine (which was then part of Russia). During this time, Jewish families were victims of pogroms, organized attacks against Jews. Many Jewish people were killed, their businesses ruined, and their homes vandalized. Others, like Peter's own family, were forced to leave. Unlike most immigrants from Russia who settled on the East Coast of the United States, Peter's family decided to settle in Los Angeles, where the Jewish community was very small. His paintings reflected subjects from the Hebrew Bible and depictions of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. After immigrating to the United States, Peter painted this picture of himself and his wife, Rose, leaving their homeland.



*Food Will Win the War*  
by Charles Edward Chambers

Making a new life in America was very difficult. Immigrants had to find places to live, get a job, and learn a new language and new customs. Charles Edward Chambers, an illustrator and painter, created this image for a series of posters that were displayed during World War I (1914–1918). This particular poster encouraged immigrants to participate in the war effort by not wasting food. The posters were placed in immigrant neighborhoods and published in several languages, including English, Yiddish, and Italian, so that immigrants could read them.

## COMPARISON CHART

Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

<i>The Wanderers</i> by Peter Krasnow	<i>Food Will Win the War</i> by Charles Edward Chambers
<i>Look closely. What is the first thing you notice about this image?</i>	
<i>What is happening in the image? What is the story?</i>	
<i>What colors do you see? How would you describe the mood of this image?</i>	
<i>What do you think the people are feeling?</i>	
<i>What might you say if you were a character in this image?</i>	

## ACT IT OUT!

**Objective:** Students will participate in an imaginative role-playing experience that will build listening and speaking skills and empathy, and will help students put themselves in the shoes of others.

**Tour Connection:** During the tour, students will participate in role-playing activities, acting out the experience of immigrants from the early 1900s, dressing up in costumes, and listening to first-person stories.

**Materials:** Open space inside or outside of the classroom and imagination!

**Instructions:** All cultures tell stories and sometimes enhance them with gestures, movement, music, and crafts.

### 1. Activity: Pantomime

Ask students to use facial expressions, gestures, and movements to reveal emotion and describe a situation. Students may act out and/or mime emotions that might be used when telling a story. Play the game “Mirror My Emotion,” in which the first person names and pantomimes an emotion and the rest of the class in turn mimics the emotion (sad, happy, disgusted, glad, disappointed, terrified, etc.); continue the activity with the next student and encourage them to choose a different emotion.

### 2. Activity: Milling About

\*Note: This activity requires some open space.\*

Instruct your students to walk around the room at their own pace. Begin calling out simple commands:

- walk very quickly like you are in a big city
- walk slowly like your feet weigh 100 pounds each
- walk as if you are extremely tired
- walk like you are very excited

Other ways of milling include walking backwards, skating, walking like a particular animal, walking as if you were wearing stilts, crawling, hopping, etc.

### 3. Activity: Role Playing

Ask students, working in pairs or small groups, to use action and dialogue to illustrate a story. Help students come up with a story based on everyday experiences and support them as they practice their story before presenting it to the class. Stories can be based on a segment of a book read in class or a daily event from students’ lives.

Sample prompts:

1. Prepare a birthday party for your best friend;
2. Help a new student get to know everyone;
3. Find a place to eat while on vacation in an unfamiliar place;
4. Help a lost puppy find its owner;
5. Help your friend with homework.

## EXPLORING HISTORY AND IMMIGRATION

**Objective:** Students will work in small groups to discuss, identify, and analyze the impact of historical events on United States immigration.

**Tour Connection:** During the tour, students will identify and discuss reasons why people decide to immigrate to America.

**Materials:**

- Photocopies (one set per group) of charts: *Total Immigrants by Decade* (p. 14) and *Major Historical Events of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century* (p. 15)
- Photocopies of Student Notes (p. 16)
- Pencils

**Instructions:** In your group, explore and discuss the charts below, and then work together to answer the questions. Present your findings to the class.

Source for Chart 1:

[http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/immigrants\\_data/index.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/immigrants_data/index.htm)

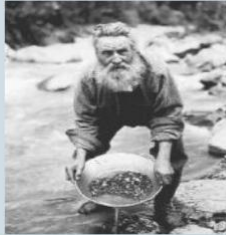
CHART 1



CHART 2

Skirball Cultural Center

## Major Historical Events of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century



### Gold Rush 1848–1855

The discovery of gold nuggets in the Sacramento Valley in California sparked the Gold Rush—one of the most significant events to shape American history in the nineteenth century. It drew many people from around the globe to United States.



### World War I 1914–1918

World War I, also known as the Great War, was a global conflict centered in Europe. Many people escaped war by immigrating to various countries, including the United States.



### World War II 1939–1945

World War II was a global conflict focused in Europe, Asia, and parts of Africa. Immigration laws in the United States at the time prevented many people from moving to America.



### The Great Depression 1929–1939

The Great Depression was an economic collapse in North America, Europe, and other industrialized areas of the world. People migrated to look for a better life and more work opportunities.



### Immigration and Nationality Act 1965

This immigration law reunited people living in other countries with their families who were living in the United States. It also allowed skilled workers to find jobs in the United States. More people moved to America as a result of these changes.



### Immigration Act 1990

This act increased the number of immigrants allowed into the United States each year.

## CHARTS 1 AND 2

### Student Notes

Based on the information outlined in each chart, work with your group to answer the following questions:

1. Based on what you see in Chart 1, which decades have the lowest immigration rates? Which have the highest immigration rates?

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2. Look at the events and their descriptions on Chart 2. What factors forced people to leave their home countries for America?

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3. Based on what you can see in Charts 1 and 2, which historical event contributed to a decrease in immigration to America in the 1930s and 1940s?

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4. Are there any historical events that contributed to your family's immigration story?

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## AT HOME

This activity can be used to introduce or reinforce lessons learned during the tour at the Skirball Cultural Center by making the idea of immigration a personal experience. Feel free to photocopy these worksheets or adapt them to suit your students' needs.

We encourage you to share your own family story with your students when introducing this assignment.

## MY FAMILY'S STORY

**Objective:** Students will write informational text to examine an aspect of their family's story and clearly convey ideas and information.

**Tour Connection:** Students will hear several stories about different families during the tour.

**Assignment Instructions:** Students will interview a family member and gather information about their family's history and heritage. Use the guiding questions (p. 18) as a starting point. Students may want to add their own questions as well. Based on the interview and their own research, if applicable, students will identify and explore a family heirloom and write about their family's story.

## MY FAMILY'S STORY

### Student Notes

Ask an older family member—mother, father, grandparent, aunt, or uncle—to help you answer the questions below. You may want to add your own questions to gather more information.

1. Where did our family live before moving to the United States? Why did they move?

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2. How long has our family lived in the United States? What relevant historical events were taking place at that time?

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3. What was our family's experience going through immigration from one place to another? What were some of the challenges? What were some of the emotions?

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4. Is there an heirloom that is special to our family? Where does it come from?

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5. Why is this object special in our family? Is it used on special occasions or every day?

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6. How do this object and our family history represent our family values?

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As part of your research, look at family photos or interview more than one family member.

Based on your discoveries, write a two-paragraph informational text describing your family's story. Include any historical facts that influenced your family. Use your heirloom to showcase your family values.

## AFTER THE VISIT

### CREATIVE WRITING: YOUR SUITCASE

**Objective:** Students will synthesize information they discovered during the tour at the Skirball, using their own experiences and imagination.

**Assignment Instructions:**

1. Think about stories you explored during your field trip to the Skirball.
2. Imagine that you have to leave your home, just like Reva or Marion. You are able to pack only three items that are important to you and that represent who you are and what you value.
3. Write a first-person, five-paragraph essay about what you would pack and why. Include descriptions for each object and your reasons for packing it. Address the importance and meaning. Do you think one of the objects you selected would become a new family heirloom?
4. Time permitting, illustrate your essay. Take photos or draw each item you would pack.
5. We want to hear from you! Please share your essays with us! Email them to us at [education@skirball.org](mailto:education@skirball.org) or mail them to the Skirball Cultural Center's Education Department at 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90049.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

These resources can be used to connect your visit to the Skirball with your curriculum.

- **Skirball Cultural Center**  
School tour and other teacher resources  
[skirball.org/education](http://skirball.org/education)
- **National Park Service**  
Historical and cultural facts about Ellis Island  
[nps.gov/elis/index.htm](http://nps.gov/elis/index.htm)
- **Tenement Museum**  
History of Manhattan's Lower East Side neighborhood  
[tenement.org](http://tenement.org)
- **Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes**  
Meaningful and memorable project-based experiences  
[lowellmilkencenter.org](http://lowellmilkencenter.org)
- **StoryCorps**  
One of the largest oral history collections of its kind  
[storycorps.org](http://storycorps.org)
- **Immigrant Nation**  
Explorations of immigration, past and present, through storytelling  
[immigrant-nation.com](http://immigrant-nation.com)
- **Constitutional Rights Foundation, Celebrating America**  
Resource for celebrating America's civic holidays  
[cfcelebrateamerica.org](http://cfcelebrateamerica.org)
- **PBS Learning Media**  
Classroom-ready, curriculum-targeted digital resources  
[pbslearningmedia.org](http://pbslearningmedia.org)
- **Immigration Stories of Yesterday and Today**  
Immigration-related materials from 1492 to today  
[teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/index.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/index.htm)