

TEACHER GUIDE

Americans and Their Family Stories

Grade 5 School Tour



A Program of the Education Department
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Skirball 
Cultural Center

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome _____	3
About the Skirball _____	3
Pre-Visit Checklist _____	3
Tour Goals _____	4
Tour Vocabulary _____	4
Activities Overview _____	5
Pre-Visit Activities	
Lesson Plan: Compare and Contrast _____	6
Lesson Plan: Act It Out! _____	10
Lesson Plan: Exploring History and Immigration _____	11
Take-Home Activity: My Family's Story _____	16
Post-Visit Activities	
Lesson Plan: Packing Your Suitcase _____	18
Additional Resources _____	19
Curriculum Connections _____	20

WELCOME

Welcome to the Skirball Cultural Center! We are thrilled that you and your class will participate in 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 immigration experiences to the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, and discover how these experiences relate to their own family stories.

Here at the Skirball, we celebrate all cultures and strive to be a place of welcome for all. We live in contentious times, but the Skirball seeks to honor all immigration stories regardless of their country of origin or legal status. We believe immigration is important for the success of the United States, just like President John F. Kennedy outlined in his book *A Nation of Immigrants*.

The following activities will make your visit to the Skirball a more rewarding and enriching experience. We encourage you to adapt the activities to the specific needs of your class.

ABOUT THE SKIRBALL

The Skirball Cultural Center is a place of meeting guided by the Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger and inspired by the American democratic ideals of freedom and equality. We welcome people of all communities and generations to participate in cultural experiences that celebrate discovery and hope, foster human connections, and call upon us to help build a more just society.

PRE-VISIT CHECKLIST

Before you arrive at the Skirball, please make sure you prepare the following:

- Print a complete list of student names in case of an emergency.
- Create a readable nametag for each student.
- If your group is larger than thirty students, divide them into two even groups, then further divide each half into five smaller groups.
- Be sure that you have one adult (teacher or chaperone) for every fifteen students. The maximum number of adults admitted is ten (teachers and chaperones combined).
- Get ready to join the fun! Teachers and chaperones, tuck phones away, unplug, and be active participants with your students. If you need to make a call or check messages during the program, feel free to briefly step away. Otherwise, please always remain with your group in case of an emergency.
- Visit our [FAQ webpage](#) for more information. The Skirball welcomes students of all learning abilities with an ever-expanding list of amenities and services, such as sensory bags and noise-dampening headphones. Please email education@skirball.org to request any accommodations.

TOUR GOALS

Students will explore family stories through primary and secondary sources—artifacts, storytelling, reading, etc.

Students will feel empathy for and learn more about the experiences of people who immigrated, escaped their home countries, or were enslaved. Then they will explore the ways people were able to adapt, face challenges, and—in some cases—find new opportunities.

Students will understand how immigrants form new traditions while also maintaining original customs—and in many cases combining the two. Students will learn the difference between acculturation and assimilation.

Students will see commonalities and differences between family stories across different times, geographical locations, and cultures.

TOUR VOCABULARY

CITIZEN

A native or naturalized member of a state or nation who owes allegiance to its government and is entitled to its protection

DIVERSITY

The quality or condition of being different or varied

HERITAGE

Something handed down from one's ancestors, or the past, as in a characteristic, a culture, or tradition

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

CULTURE

The beliefs, customs, arts, etc. of a particular society, group, place, or time

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

IMMIGRANT

A person who leaves his or her own country to live permanently in another

REFUGEE

A person who has been forced to leave his or her country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster

DISCRIMINATION

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially on the grounds of race, religion, age, or gender

HEIRLOOM

A valued family possession handed down from generation to generation

IMMIGRATION

A process of leaving one place for the purpose of permanently settling in a different place

REVOLUTION

The attempt, usually violent, by many people to end the rule of one government and start a new one

ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

PRE-VISIT Activities

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

LESSON PLAN: COMPARE AND CONTRAST



Use your visual analysis skills to compare and contrast two images in the Skirball's collection.

LESSON PLAN: ACT IT OUT!



Become better storytellers through this imaginative role-playing experience.

LESSON PLAN: EXPLORING HISTORY AND IMMIGRATION



Analyze and discuss the impact of historical events on American immigration.

TAKE-HOME ACTIVITY

MY FAMILY'S STORY



Interview a family and/or a community member to learn about their immigration journey, and write an essay detailing that experience.

POST-VISIT Activity

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

LESSON PLAN: PACKING YOUR SUITCASE



Write a creative essay based on the themes of the field trip.

**LESSON PLAN:**
COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Duration: 20–40 minutes

SUPPLIES

- Whiteboard
- Dry erase markers
- *The Wanderers* painting by Peter Krasnow
- *Food Will Win the War* poster by Charles Edward Chambers
- Comparison chart

TOUR CONNECTIONS

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

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.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Begin with a brainstorm about the meaning of the term “immigration,” and write students’ responses on the whiteboard. If needed, use the prompts below or add your own:
 - What does it mean to “immigrate”?
 - What reasons do people have for immigrating to the US?
 - What feelings might people experience when leaving their homes?
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
<p>Look closely. What is the first thing you notice about this image?</p>	
<p>What is happening in the image? What is the story?</p>	
<p>What colors do you see? How would you describe the mood of this image?</p>	
<p>What do you think the people are feeling?</p>	
<p>What might you say if you were a character in this image?</p>	



LESSON PLAN:
ACT IT OUT!

Duration: 30–50 minutes

SUPPLIES

- Open space inside or outside of the classroom
- Imagination!

TOUR CONNECTIONS

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.

OBJECTIVE

Students will participate in an imaginative role-playing experience that will build listening and speaking skills as well as empathy.

INSTRUCTIONS

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

Instruct your students to walk around the room at their own pace. Then call 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.
- Walk backwards.
- Skate.
- Walk like a particular animal.
- Walk as if you were wearing stilts.
- Crawl.
- Hop.

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. You may also use one of the following sample prompts:

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



LESSON PLAN:

EXPLORING HISTORY AND IMMIGRATION

Duration: 20–40 minutes

SUPPLIES

- Photocopies (one set per group) of:
 - Chart 1 (“Total Immigrants by Decade”)
 - Chart 2 (“Number of Immigrants and Their Share of the Total US Population, 1850–2017”)
 - Chart 3 (“Major Historical Events of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries”)
- Photocopies of “Exploring History and Immigration” worksheet
- Pencils

TOUR CONNECTIONS

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

OBJECTIVE

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

INSTRUCTIONS

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

CHART 1

Total Immigrants by Decade

This chart shows, by decade, the number of legal immigrants who came to America from 1820 through 2009.

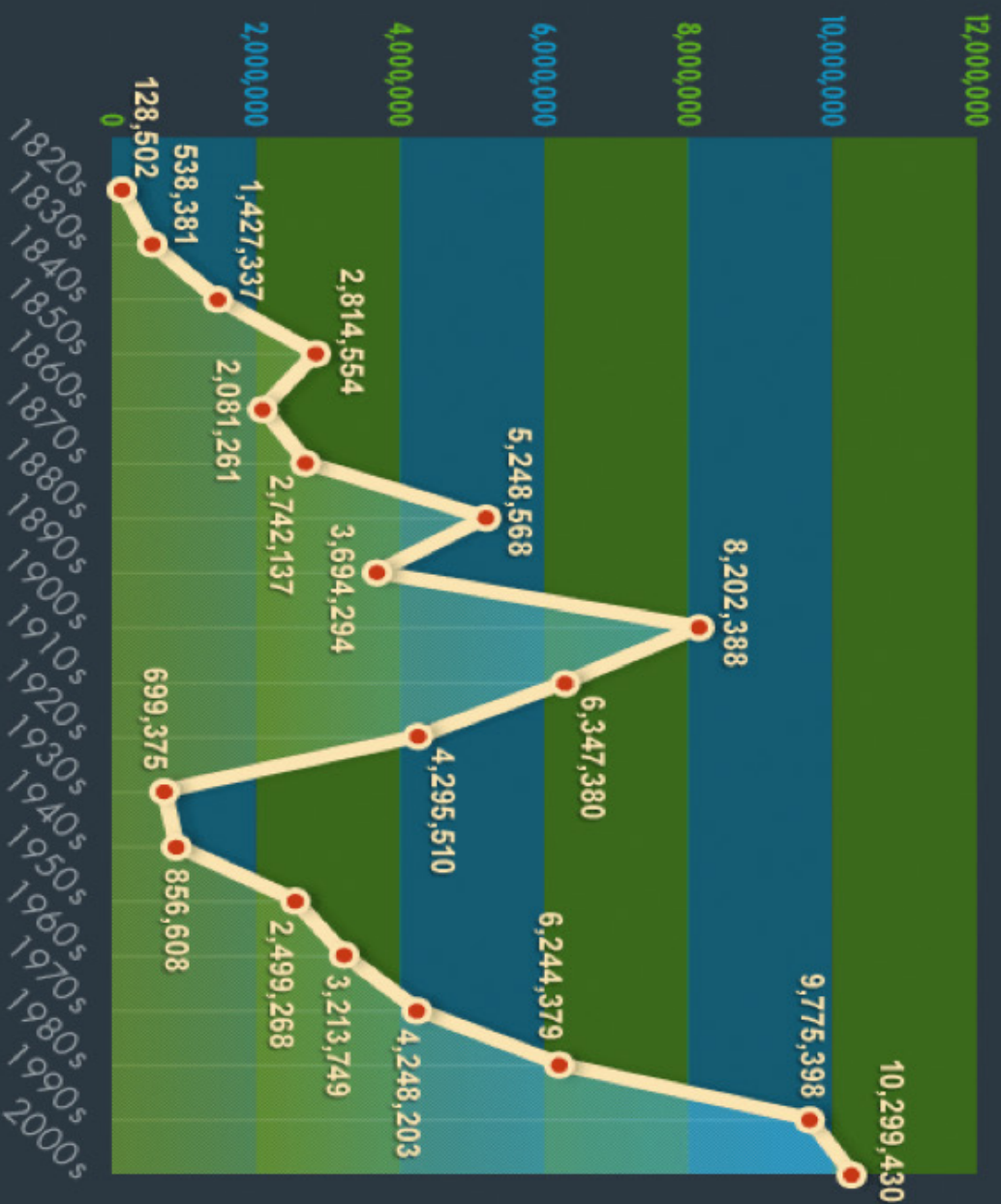


CHART 2

Number of Immigrants and Their Share of the Total U.S. Population, 1850-2017

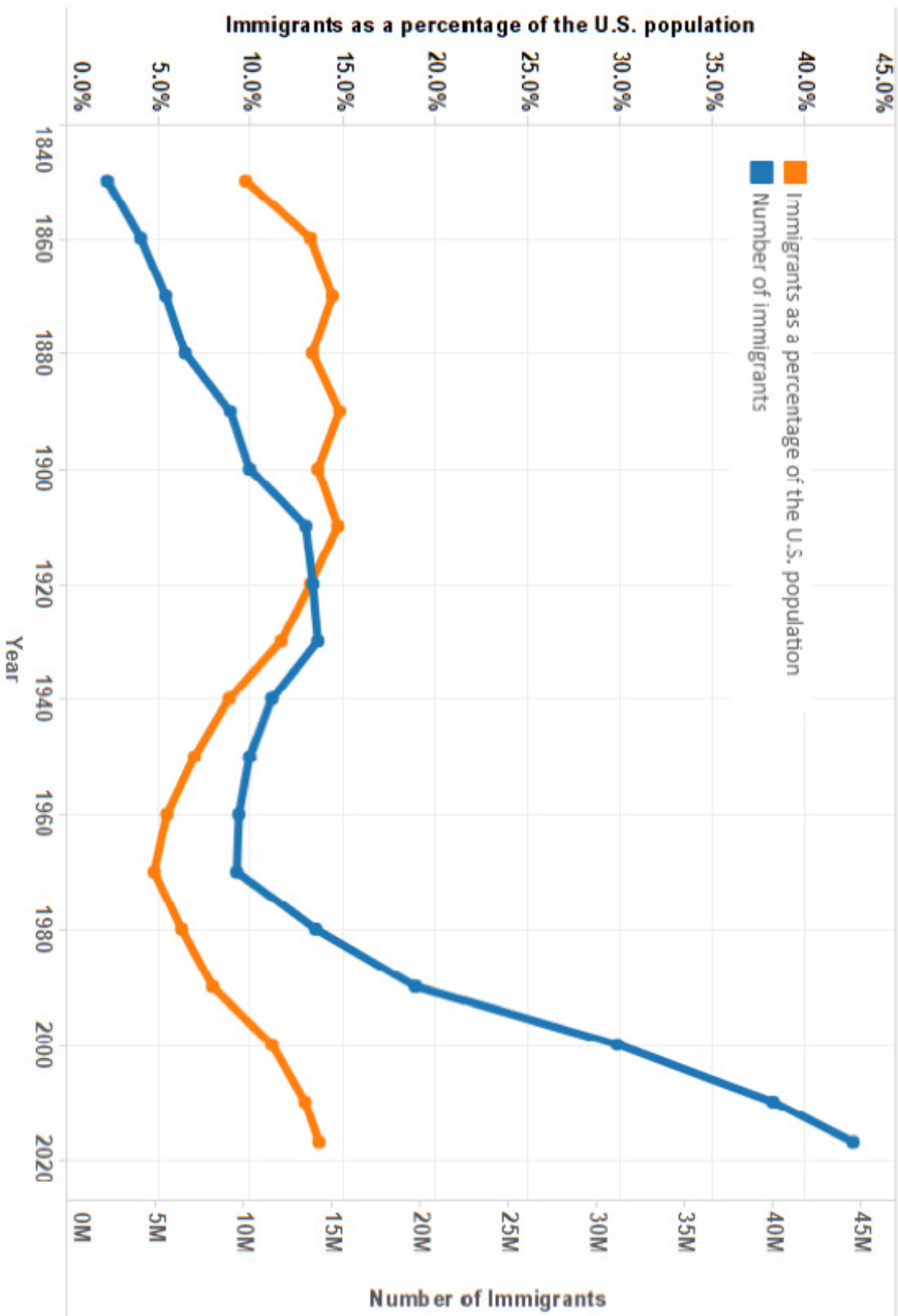
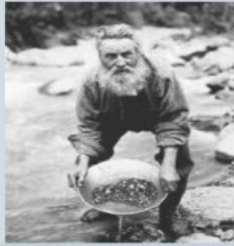


CHART 3

Major Historical Events of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries



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.

EXPLORING HISTORY AND IMMIGRATION

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

1. Based on what you see in Charts 1 and 2, which decades have the lowest immigration rates? Which have the highest immigration rates?

2. Look at the events and their descriptions on Chart 3. What factors forced people to leave their home countries for America?

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

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



MY FAMILY'S STORY

Duration: 20–40 minutes

SUPPLIES

- Photocopies (one per student) of “My Family’s Story” worksheet
- Pencils

TOUR CONNECTIONS

Students will hear several stories about different families during the tour.

OBJECTIVE

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

INSTRUCTIONS

Students will interview a family member and gather information about their family’s history and heritage. Use the guiding questions on the “My Family’s Story” worksheet 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.

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

MY FAMILY'S STORY

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?

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

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?

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

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

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

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.



LESSON PLAN:
PACKING YOUR SUITCASE

Duration: 20–40 minutes

SUPPLIES

- Paper
- Pencils
- Colored pencils

TOUR CONNECTIONS

During the tour, students will unpack a suitcase filled with items that someone brought with them during their immigration journey.

OBJECTIVE

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

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Think about stories you explored during your field trip to the Skirball.
2. Imagine that you must leave your home, just like Reva. You can 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 of each object. 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 TO:

education@skirball.org

OR

MAIL TO:

Skirball Cultural Center
Education Department
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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

National Park Service

Historical and cultural facts about Ellis Island
nps.gov/elis/index.htm

Tenement Museum

History of Manhattan's Lower East Side neighborhood
tenement.org

Lowell Milken Center for Unsung Heroes

Meaningful and memorable project-based experiences
lowellmilkencenter.org

StoryCorps

One of the largest oral history collections of its kind
storycorps.org

Constitutional Rights Foundation, Celebrating America

Resource for celebrating America's civic holidays
crf-usa.org

PBS Learning Media

Classroom-ready, curriculum-targeted digital resources
pbslearningmedia.org

Immigration Stories of Yesterday and Today

Immigration-related materials from 1492 to today
teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/index.htm

Define American

First-hand video accounts by undocumented Americans
defineamerican.com

Dear America: Young Readers' Edition

Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and undocumented immigrant Jose Antonio Vargas shares his story in this young readers' adaptation of his memoir *Dear America*.

harcollins.com/9780062914590/dear-america-young-readers-edition/

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

CA COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

RL.5.2—Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

RL.5.3—Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

SL.5.1—Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CALIFORNIA STATE ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

Speaking Applications 2.1—Deliver narrative presentations:

- a. Establish a situation, plot, point of view, and setting with descriptive words and phrases.
- b. Show, rather than tell, the listener what happens.

Speaking Applications 2.2—Deliver informative presentations about an important idea, issue, or event by the following means:

- a. Frame questions to direct the investigation.
- b. Establish a controlling idea or topic.
- c. Develop the topic with simple facts, details, examples, and explanations.

Comprehension 1.3—Make inferences or draw conclusions based on an oral report.

Comprehension 1.5—Clarify and support spoken ideas with evidence and examples.

CALIFORNIA STATE HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE STANDARDS

5.4.6—Describe the introduction of slavery into America, the responses of slave families to their condition, the ongoing struggle between proponents and opponents of slavery, and the gradual institutionalization of slavery in the South.

CALIFORNIA STATE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS STANDARDS

THEATER

Creative Expression 2.1—Create, memorize, and perform complex sequences of movement with greater focus, force/energy, and intent.

Historical and Cultural Context 3.2—Identify and perform folk/traditional, social, and theatrical dances done by Americans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.