



Peak Immigration Years 8th-12th Grade On-Site Activity Plan

Overview:

The purpose of this program is to use visually engaging primary documents to help students contemplate and discuss contemporary issues related to immigration (particularly, in the *Closing the Doors* room of the *Peak Immigration Years* exhibit). In addition, this program should encourage critical thinking about published images and words that promote a particular point of view.

Time Frame:

25-30 Minutes

Materials:

Images from the *Peak Immigration Years* exhibit, Pen and paper

Objectives:

By the end of the activity, students will be able to:

- Explore how cartoonists use political cartoons to influence public opinion.
- Evaluate the cartoonist point of view.
- Consider different perspectives on the same issue through dialogue and discussion.
- Participate in a dialogue about their own ideas regarding these issues.

Procedure:

- 1) Head to the second floor to the *Peak Immigration Years* exhibit. Proceed through to the galleries until you arrive at the gallery, *Closing the Doors* (right behind the black and white sign that signaled Immigration Restriction).
- 2) Introduction:
Inform students that before we had films, people used political cartoons (and still do) to galvanize people around issues. Explain that in this activity, students will be analyzing political cartoons that will compare past and present issues on immigration. They will consider the cartoonist's point of view, how the cartoonist makes his or her point and what perspectives or

considerations are not presented in the illustration. They will also think about and share their own ideas regarding issues raised in these cartoons.

- 3) Divide the students into groups of four. Instruct each group to analyze a specific set of cartoons (Set B) in the *Closing the Door* exhibit. Ask them to consider the following questions:
 - What was the illustrator trying to say?
 - How did he or she attempt to do this?
 - Are the characters in the cartoon symbols of a broader group or idea?
 - What group or individual perspectives are NOT represented in this illustration?Once finished, select a contemporary cartoon (from Set A) and reflect on the same questions.
- 4) After completing the activity, head to the benches (if available) in the Great Hall. Ask each group to share their cartoons with the class and to summarize their answers to the questions. Encourage them to report back on any different interpretations they had within their group.
- 5) For either set of cartoons/images, ask the group to discuss one or more of the following questions. When comparing the images, have the students consider the questions below:

Cartoon Set A – Contemporary views of immigration, labor, and healthcare¹

Cartoon Set B – Ideas about U.S. immigration past and present

- Why do you think people created and published these cartoons? What was each author hoping to achieve? Who is the intended audience?
- How does each illustrator want the reader to feel about immigration?
- Whose interests do these viewpoints serve?
- What do you think about the contemporary cartoons? Do you agree or disagree with the cartoonist's point of view?
- How did the American society express their concerns about newly-arrived immigrants?
- To what extent have these issues changed or not changed over time?
- When you compare the cartoons, what is the difference between the statements they are trying to make?

¹ Please note that the contemporary examples used on the next page are just a small sample of a large collection of political cartoons available. Please consult other resources on which material you find most appropriate.



²SET A Anonymous, ca. 2008



³SET A KAL, May 2007



SET B⁴ Puck June 2, 1909



SET B – Puck ca. 1905



SET B

Los Angeles Times February 1921, Culver Pictures



SET B

Chicago Tribune ca. 1921, Culver Pictures

²http://www.umass.edu/accela/lc/794d/sfl/images/Political%20cartoon_on_immigration%20tsunami%20statue%20of%20liberty.jpg

³ <http://fairimmigration.files.wordpress.com/2007/05/immigration-cartoon1.jpg>

⁴ Please note: ALL SET B CARTOONS can be found at the Peak Immigration Years exhibit.