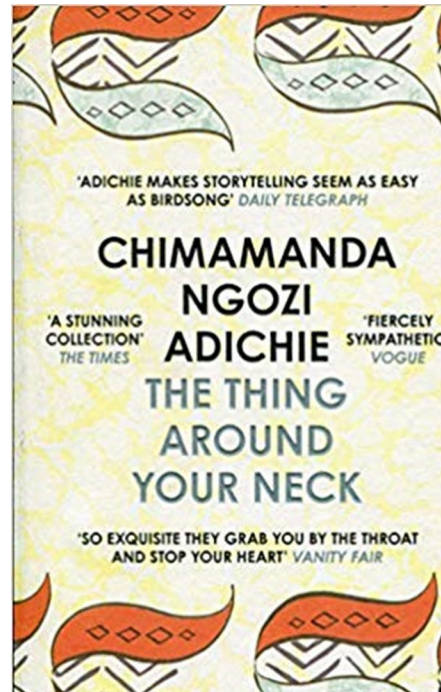
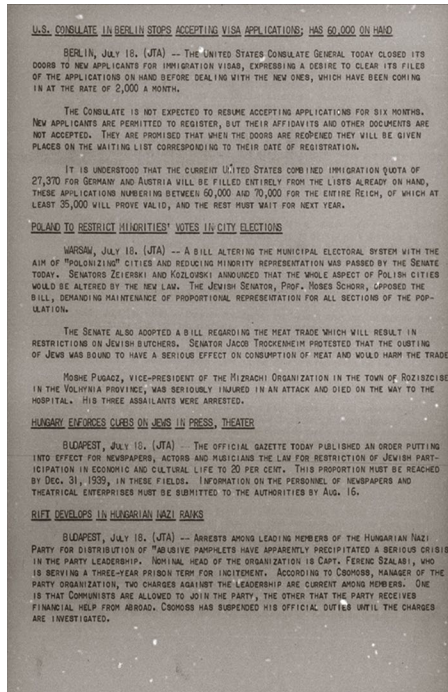


Students act as literary analysts to compare depictions of attempts for immigration in artifacts from the 1938Projekt and contemporary short fiction.



QUESTIONS EXAMINED

WHAT ROLE DO POLICIES PLAY IN DEHUMANIZING IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE?

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF DIFFERENT INFORMATION SOURCES IN COMMUNICATING COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT IDEAS?

THEMES Belonging, Dehumanization, Exclusion, Regulation, Rejection, Uncertainty

Subject

Humanities:
Social Studies,
ELA

Grades

9-12

Author

Nedra
MANNING

RESOURCES INCLUDED

For Teachers

- Context for this Lesson
- Why Use Fiction and Non-Fiction to Examine Immigrant Experiences?
- Notes on Texts
- Key Terms / Vocabulary
- Focus Questions
- Big Understandings
- Teaching Point
- Objectives
- Materials Needed
- Procedure

For Students

- Handout 1: Comparing Texts
- Handout 2: Analyzing Texts

EXTERNAL LINKS

[About the Leo Baeck Institute & the 1938Projekt](#)

[Key Dates: Jews Under the Nazi Regime 1933–1939](#)

CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON

This lesson plan asks students and instructors to look at the process of immigration as a means for escaping dangerous and unstable circumstances and to examine the obstacles, as well as the subtle and gross inhumanities, that confront people as they try to immigrate. The lesson contrasts personal, human-scale responses to the immigration process with a bureaucratic, often dehumanizing one. This lesson’s goal is for students to consider the complications that aspiring immigrants face and how the dehumanization of migrants can lead to dire consequences for many people trapped in uncertain and unsafe circumstances around the globe.

Why use fiction and non-fiction to examine immigrant experiences?

In this lesson students will be analyzing the similarities and differences between immigration experiences presented in two texts: One from Nazi Germany before the Holocaust and a fictional passage from late 1990s Nigeria.

These two texts both come from contexts in which the people featured were in life-threatening situations and looking for a way to flee their home countries in search of safety. The texts cross time and circumstance to address the challenges faced by aspiring immigrants and provide counterpoints for students to analyze the personal, human-scale experience of immigration with the impersonal, bureaucratic one.

Reading both fiction and nonfiction on a shared topic or theme allows the reader to access human experiences from a variety of viewpoints, to consider author intent and historical context, and to weigh the impact of different information sources.

Cover Page Images

(Left) Bulletin from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency “U.S. Consulate in Berlin Stops Accepting Visa Applications; Has 60,000 on Hand”, July 19, 1938

(Right) Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. The Thing Around Your Neck. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON (CONT.)

Fiction is intentionally crafted by authors, often with the purpose of helping readers digest complex ideas or situations. When reading the story “American Embassy,” by the author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie it would be helpful for students to consider the following questions:

- What is the tone of this piece?
- How would you characterize the immigration experience in this piece?
- From whose perspective is the story written?
- What details are included that help us to understand her experience?
- Why might the author have chosen to use this specific language?

Non-Fiction documents, like the primary source used in this historical study, are often created with the intention to inform and explain. In this lesson, students will be examining a dispatch from the Jewish Telegraphic Agency documenting the thwarted immigration efforts of Jewish people attempting to flee Nazi Europe in 1938. When examining this document, students should use the tools of historians to consider:

- When was this source created and by whom?
- Who was the audience for this source?
- What is the purpose
- What is the tone?
- What else was going on at the time this document was written?
- How would you characterize the immigration experience in this piece?
- What don't we know?

CONTEXT FOR THIS LESSON (CONT.)

Background information from the Leo Baeck Institute exhibition 1938Projekt: Posts from the Past, curated by Magdalena M. Wrobel, Ph.D

The Leo Baeck Institute was founded in 1955 by leading German-Jewish émigré intellectuals who were determined to preserve the vibrant cultural heritage of German-speaking Jewry that was nearly destroyed in the Holocaust. They named the Institute for Rabbi Leo Baeck, the last leader of Germany's Jewish Community under the Nazi regime.

Today, the Leo Baeck Institute — New York | Berlin (LBI) is devoted to preserving and promoting the history and culture of German-speaking Jewry. Its archival, art, and library collections tell the story of Jews in German and world history. As Jews enjoyed growing social and political empowerment in the 19th century, they played a significant role in shaping art, science, business, and political developments in the modern era with leading figures including Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, and Franz Kafka.

In the 20th century, German and Austrian Jews fought in the First World War to demonstrate their patriotism and further their quest for social equality. Following the war, the Weimar Republic provided more opportunities for advancement. After the Nazis rose to power in January 1933, Jews were persecuted and by 1938, it was clear that Jewish life in Germany, as they knew it, was no longer possible.

Today, as right-wing populism gains new followers around the world, the personal narratives and private thoughts recorded by German and Austrian Jews in letters and diaries in 1938 take on new meaning. They can tell us much about a minority's struggle for civil rights and social integration, as well as the tremendous achievements that follow when such struggles are successful. They also offer a warning about the disastrous consequences of discrimination, exclusion, and persecution.

NOTES ON THE TEXTS

Text #1 Context

In “The American Embassy,” a short story from *The Thing Around Your Neck* collection, the author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie centers the story on a woman waiting in a busy line for a visa. The story is also told through a series of flashbacks and memories.

“The American Embassy” takes place in several cities in Nigeria during the late 1990s. During this intense political period Nigeria was recovering from dictatorships including one under General Abacha.

(From the NYTimes Review “African/American”) For many Lagos residents an American visa is a coveted prize. In “The American Embassy” Ms. Adichie describes a line of some 200 people trailing around the block; the vendors who blow whistles and push copies of newspapers at the people in line; the beggars who work the line, holding out enamel plates; the ice cream bicycles that honk.

Text #2 Context

On July 19, 1938 the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reports that the United States Consulate General in Berlin stopped accepting new visa applications. According to the Consulate, about 2000 people applied for visas per month. Due to the high demand, the Consulate prioritized clearing the files of the applications on hand. The hard-won affidavits and other documents of new applicants were not long accepted, though new applicants were put on a waitlist. Consequently, Jews who were planning to leave Germany or the annexed Austria for the USA would have to wait until the next year to get a chance at obtaining a visa. It can be assumed that the 60,000 to 70,000 applications by emigrants from Germany/Austria which were waiting to be processed had already significantly surpassed the annual US quota of 27,370 visas for immigrants from the *Deutsches Reich*. (From the 1938Projekt, Leo Baeck Institute New York/Berlin)

Tips for Alteration or Extension

This lesson can take at least two 45-minute periods.

Teachers may substitute other short stories to provide a range of reading and level of text complexity. For example, the graphic novel “The Arrival” by Shaun Tan deals with a similar topic and themes.

Similarly, consider substituting or adding a current day news story in order to complicate the points of comparison by using two non-fiction passages.

KEY TERMS / VOCABULARY

Arbitrary

Based on random choice or personal whim, rather than any reason or system

Fiction

Literature in the form of prose, especially short stories and novels, that describes imaginary or invented events and people

Migration

The act of moving from one location to another, sometimes across geographic or political borders

Non-fiction

Prose writing that is based on facts, real events, and real people, such as biography or history; broadest category of literature

Quota

A limit on the number of immigrants granted government approval to enter the United States, determined by their country of origin.

Visa

A certificate granted by a country giving a traveler permission to leave, enter, or stay for a certain amount of time, or to allow certain activities by foreigners like working or going to school. Many Jewish citizens of Germany and Austria in 1938 had valid passports, but struggled to get the visas needed in order to leave their home country or enter a new country.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

How can fiction and non-fiction each help us to understand complex situations?

What are the strengths and limitations of each type of source?

How are immigration experiences similar across time and space?

How do the obstacles presented by immigration compare and contrast?

What do these texts tell us about the power that immigration policy or processes have on people's lives?

How does bureaucracy help people to look away from human tragedy?

BIG UNDERSTANDINGS

- Bureaucracy and dehumanizing practices allow people to look away from human tragedy.
- Fiction and non-fiction have different ways of helping us understand human experience.

TEACHING POINT

There are constantly world events that put people in danger and require them to leave their home countries. These documents help people see and understand this from multiple vantage points. While fiction is intended to illuminate these experiences, nonfiction is often not initially meant for this purpose, but as historians, we can use nonfiction to help educate and humanize.

OBJECTIVES: Student will

1. Closely read a work of fiction and non-fiction on a similar topic
2. Contextualize sources within their time periods and specific circumstances
3. Compare immigrant experiences across time and space
4. Consider various obstacles to immigration that are both personal and bureaucratic
5. Evaluate the role that bureaucracy plays in dehumanizing human experience

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Chromebooks, iPads, or other devices for students to access the 1938 Projekt website
- Student Handout 1: Comparing Texts
- Student Handout 2: Analyzing Texts
- Easily accessible link to the following 1938 Projekt Post
 - [Entry 7/19/1938](#)
- A copy of the short story “American Embassy” from the *Thing Around Your Neck* collection by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie or an alternative short story or excerpt of your choice

PROCEDURE

WARM UP

Ask students to write down then discuss:

- What are some fiction texts that you've read recently?
- What are some nonfiction texts that you've read recently?
- How are fiction and nonfiction different? How are fiction and nonfiction similar?

MINI LESSON

Tell students they will be analyzing the similarities and differences between immigration experiences presented in two texts: one is from Nazi Germany before the Holocaust and a fiction text from late 1990s Nigeria.

Explain the reason that these texts were chosen is that they both come from contexts in which the people featured were in life-threatening situations and looking for a way to flee their home countries in search of safety.

Read aloud the beginning of the fiction text. After a page, have students continue to popcorn read the text. During a popcorn read, a student reads aloud then calls out "popcorn" before naming the next student who will read.

POPCORN READ

While the text is read aloud, students should respond to the following Guiding Questions on their handouts:

1. Is this fiction or non-fiction? How do you know?
2. What stands out to you about the people/characters mentioned?
3. How has immigration policy or process affected peoples' lives in the text?

Have students repeat the process for the non-fiction text on their own. After students read, they will respond to the same guiding questions on their handout:

1. Is this fiction or non-fiction? How do you know?
2. What stands out to you about the people/characters mentioned?
3. How has immigration policy or process affected peoples' lives in the text?

INDEPENDENT WORK

PROCEDURE (CONT.)

After reading both texts, students should respond to the following Discussion Questions independently:

- How are the ideas in the texts similar or different?
- How do the documents communicate that? Cite specific evidence from both texts.
- Which document do you find most powerful and why?
- What can we learn from these documents about the human experience of immigration?

WRAP UP/ REFLECT

Once students have read and responded to questions on their own, facilitate a whole class discussion about the Discussion Questions.

In a whole class discussion, consider raising the following focus questions:

- How can fiction and non-fiction help us to understand complex situations?
- What are the strengths and limitations of each source?
- How are immigration experiences similar across time and space?
- How do the obstacles to immigration compare and contrast?
- What do these texts tell us about the power that immigration policy or processes have on people's lives?
- How does bureaucracy help people to look away from human tragedy?

**HANDOUT 1:
Comparing
Texts**

Immigration in Fiction and Non-Fiction

How do you know this document is fiction or nonfiction?

What stands out to you about the people/characters mentioned?

How has immigration policy or process affected peoples' lives in the text?

Text #1: _____	Text #2: _____
Fiction	Nonfiction

**HANDOUT 2:
Analyzing
Texts**

Immigration in Fiction and Non-Fiction

Discussion Questions

How are the ideas in the texts similar or different?

How do the documents communicate that? Cite specific evidence from both texts.

Which document do you find most powerful and why?

What can we learn from these documents about the human experience of immigration?
