

Beyond Crisis Mode: Humanizing Youth Migration to the United States

Unit Plan by Dr. Ingrid Fey

DAY 1
Essential Question(s)
How does media coverage shape Americans' views of youth migrants from Central America?
Warm-up
<p>Have students share their responses to the following question in their student handout:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you hear the word "media," what sources of information come to mind? • What forms of media do you frequent most often to get news and information?
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
<p>Texts: Tough Choices Pulitzer Center</p> <p>These Migrants Stranded at the U.S.-Mexico Border Share Why They Fled Their Homelands Pulitzer Center</p> <p>Teaching Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanizing Youth Migration Day 1 Slideshow [.pdf] • Humanizing Youth Migration Day 1 Slideshow [.docx] • Student handout for Day 1 [.pdf] • Student handout for Day 1 [.docx] • Student example: Day 1 handout [.pdf] • Student example: Day 1 handout [.docx]
Lesson / Activities
<p>Warm-Up (see above) The main point of the warm up is to have students access prior knowledge about the media and to have them think about where they get most of their news information.</p> <p>Activity 1:</p>

1. Engage with the following questions by first reflecting on your own, and then sharing your responses with the class:
 - What do you remember about “Manifest Destiny”?
 - How are migrants (pioneers, settlers) portrayed in history textbooks?
2. Review the following video, and about migrants traveling west on the Oregon Trail and then consider how the people who are migrating in the film are depicted.

History Channel Video:

[America: Promised Land: Migrants Travel West on the Oregon Trail | History](#)

Activity 2: Compare and contrast depictions of white pioneers with those of migrants moving toward the U.S.-Mexico border.

1. Have students read the following list of words used to describe migration from Central America. Then, have students share what images/feelings these words evoke for them in their handout.

Words include:

Surge

Tidal Wave

Aliens

Crisis

Army

Border breach

Flood

Invasion

Inundation

Sneak

Illegal

Onslaught

2. Once students have recorded and shared what these words evoke for them, explain that these words come from contemporary media accounts of youth migrants to the United States. Then, have students reflect on how the use of these words might affect public perception of these people.
3. After that, ask students to compare and contrast depictions of white migrants from the 1800s with current portrayals of Central American immigrants. Have them think about which depictions are heroic? Which are villainous or threatening? Why? Give students time to record their thoughts before sharing together.

Source:

Varela, Julio Ricardo. "Opinion | Stop Using 'Surge' and 'Wave' to Describe What's Happening at the Border." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 25 Mar. 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/03/25/border-migrants-media-coverage-central-america/>

Activity 3: Data Analysis -- What are the numbers behind youth migration? (Long term and Short Term trends)

As a class, read the short article and study the Statista chart, "[Infographic: Number of Children Detained at Southern Border Rises](#)" below, which describes migration trends for families and unaccompanied minors from 2019 to March of 2021. They should answer the following questions in their handout.

1. What words used to describe recent trends in immigration stand out?
2. To what extent do the numbers back up the ways in which these trends are being described?
3. Which Trump administration policy has Biden discontinued?
4. What conditions do young migrants face at the border?

Resource: [Infographic: Number of Children Detained at Southern Border Rises](#)

Closing and Homework (if any)

Closing Activity: Have students imagine that they are reporters covering youth migration from Central America. Ask them to consider, "What questions would you ask each person?" and share their responses in their handout.

Response

Person	Question
A 16-year-old from Honduras	
A border patrol agent at the U.S. Mexican Border	

A politician with power to make immigration policy	
<p>REVISED Bloom's Taxonomy Action Verbs</p>	

Day 2
Essential Question(s)
Why do many people leave home to come to the United States?
Warm-up
<p>Have students share the following in the Student Handout for Day 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are some of the reasons why young people might choose to leave home in the United States? ● When might many young people in the U.S. leave home for the first time? ● What might be some reasons why young people don't leave home?
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
<p>Texts: Tough Choices Pulitzer Center</p> <p>These Migrants Stranded at the U.S.-Mexico Border Share Why They Fled Their Homelands Pulitzer Center</p> <p>Teaching Materials: Slideshow for facilitating with link to Day 2 Handout:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Humanizing Youth Migration Day 2 [.pdf] ● Humanizing Youth Migration Day 2 [.docx] ● Beyond Crisis Mode Student Handout Day 2 [.pdf] ● Beyond Crisis Mode Student Handout Day 2 [.docx] ● Student example of Day 2 handout [.pdf] ● Student example of Day 2 handout [.docx]

Lesson / Activities

Warm-Up: See above.

- Note to teachers: Student responses may include going away to summer camp or college, or a trip with school/clubs, etc. Such responses demonstrate the privileges that many American children have that young people in other countries don't have. On the other hand, some of the things keeping kids at home (lack of money to move out or the need to support their families) may point to the economic difficulty of moving out and getting a place of one's own. Both situations can later be referenced to contrast with the stories of youth migrants from Central America that are explored in this lesson, many of whom feel they must leave home because of poverty and to help their families.

Activity 1: Read and analyze journalist Jamie Joyce's article "Tough Choices" from *Time for Kids*. Students should record their responses to the following question in their handouts for Day 2.

- What are the main causes of youth migration out of Central America, according to the article? Record your answers below.

[Tough Choices](#) by Jaime Joyce for *Time for Kids*.

Orally or virtually: Have students share their findings. Then compare and contrast the motivations of Honduran young people for leaving home with the responses that students shared during the warm up about why students in the U.S. may choose to leave home.

Activity 2: Stranded at the U.S.-Mexico Border

1. Have students watch the short video embedded in the article "[These Migrants Stranded at the U.S.-Mexico Border Share Why They Fled Their Homelands](#)" by [Mario Pentón](#) and José Antonio Iglesias for *The Miami Herald* and complete the questions in the handout.
 - a. [Video: These Migrants Stranded at the U.S.-Mexico Border Share Why They Fled Their Homelands](#)
2. Then, have students select and read the story of one person highlighted in the article.
3. Give students some time to pair/share what they learned from focusing on the story of a specific person who is migrating. Make sure to have students write down the name of the person they read about.
4. As a debrief, ask students how giving a name and face to migrants impacts their thinking about the issue.

Activity 3: Immigration in Historical Context

1. Have students watch "How U.S. Involvement in Central America led to a Border Crisis" [How U.S. Involvement In Central America Led To a Border Crisis| AJ+](#)

2. As students watch the video, have them write down THREE ways in which U.S. policy toward Central America has contributed to the rise in migration from Central America. *Facilitation note: it may be best to generate a class list, since the video covers so much so quickly.*

Closing and Homework (if any)

Have students respond to the following prompt in their handout:

After today's activities, what do you think that Americans should know about the rising numbers of youth migrants? How might you respond to people who characterize them in terms such as "surge," "tsunami," invasion"?

Day 3
Essential Question(s)
What challenges do immigrants face as they travel North to the U.S?
Warm-up
Warm-Up: What is the longest trip you have ever taken? Where did you go? How did you get there? How was the experience?
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
<p>Texts: The Migrant Trail The Long, Dangerous Road Through the Darien Gap and a Chance Encounter in Brooklyn</p>

Mature Advisory: [What migrants face as they journey through the deadly Darien Gap](#)

[Meet some of the millions of women who migrated recently, risking everything](#)

Teaching materials:

- [Humanizing Youth Migration Day 3 \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Humanizing Youth Migration Day 3 \[.docx\]](#)
- [Student handout for Day 3 \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Student handout for Day 3 \[.docx\]](#)
- [Student example: Day 3 handout \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Student example: Day 3 handout \[.docx\]](#)

Lesson / Activities

Warm up: Have students reflect on the questions above and record their answers in the student handout for day 3.

Activity 1: Story Map of Central American Migration

Have students study the map, [The Migrant Trail](#) (for about 5 minutes) and then write a description of some of the challenges they think that migrants face as they move through Mexico toward the United States. *It is recommended that teachers familiarize themselves with this site before assigning it to students. If students keep scrolling downward, different maps and kinds of information pop up that describe the length of the journey, the routes taken, the influence of Mexican gangs and cartels, and the variety of challenges migrants face along the way. There is also information about migrant caravans and the immigration policies established by the Trump administration.*

You may also have students compare and contrast their travels with the migrant trail. If there are students who have migrated to the U.S. from other places, teachers might need to be sensitive that these topics could be difficult for students.

Activity 2: Migrants Facing the Darien Gap

1. Have students view one of the following videos and answer questions related to what they learned about the Darien Gap from the video. The shorter video shows a more abbreviated discussion of migration through the gap and also describes a reunion between the journalist who covered the story and one of the migrants she met along

the way. The full longer video is recommended for mature students only (11th/12th grade). Sections of the longer video can also be shown by the teacher. The first 5 minutes or so are not as graphic as some of the later footage.

- a. [Shorter: "The Long, Dangerous Road Through the Darien Gap and a Chance Encounter in Brooklyn" by Nadja Drost and Bruno Frederico for PBS Newshour](#)
- b. **Viewer Advisory:** ["What migrants face as they journey through the deadly Darien Gap" by Nadja Drost and Bruno Frederico for PBS Newshour](#)

2. After watching the video, have students answer the following questions in their handouts.

- Where is the Darien Gap?
- According to journalist Nadja Drost, why do migrants from around the world end up taking this dangerous path en route to the United States?
- What kinds of challenges do people face while crossing the Darien Gap? What had Ripon experienced?
- How do you think the reporting of the stories of these migrants may have been affected by the fact that the journalists had made the same trip and had traveled with migrants for days?

Activity 3: Fleeing Danger At Home -- The Migration Story of Kataleya Nativi Baca

Have students go to the story, ["Meet some of the millions of women who migrated recently, risking everything"](#) in *National Geographic* and then scroll down to Chapter 2: "The Journey: Fleeing danger at home in Honduras, she braved a perilous trip to the U.S.-Mexico border—only to find more violence and uncertainty." This story focuses on the extra challenges faced by members of the LGBTQIA community in Central America. As students read this story, they should answer the following questions in their handout.

1. Why did Kataleya feel like she had to leave Honduras? What reasons did she have that we have not yet learned about?
2. What hardships has she faced in Tijuana while waiting for an asylum hearing?
3. Why has Kataleya struggled to maintain hope that she will be able to seek asylum in the United States?

Closing and Homework (if any)

Closing Activity: Have students share responses to the following as time allows:

- Having learned about the difficulties that migrants face as they attempt to reach the U.S.-Mexico border, what do you think about the migrants themselves?

- What do their stories tell us about their hopes, fears, dreams, and determination?
- What do you think keeps them from quitting and going back home?

Day 4
Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)

Unit Assessments: Critical Media Literacy and Creative Imagining to Promote Empathy to Humanize Youth Migrants to the United States.

Warm-up

Warm-Up: Have students watch the video of Warsan Shire’s poem “Home” and respond to the following prompt: In what ways does this poem represent the experiences of the unaccompanied youth migrants we have learned about?

["Home" by Warsan Shire](#)

Note: Warsan Shire is a London-based poet-activist of Somali ancestry.

For more information about Shire, visit [Warsan Shire](#)

Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today’s lesson
Texts:

[House passes immigration bills for farm workers, 'Dreamers'](#)

[Faces of Honduras](#)

Teaching materials:

- [Slides for Humanizing Youth Migration- Day 4 \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Slides for Humanizing Youth Migration- Day 4 \[.docx\]](#)
- [Student assessment handout for Day 4 \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Student assessment handout for Day 4 \[.docx\]](#)
- [Student example: Day 3 handout \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Student example: Day 3 handout \[.docx\]](#)

Lesson / Activities

(Please include specific instructions. For example, if students read a text, what comprehension / guiding questions should they use? If they have a debate, what are the discussion

questions?)

Warm up: Have students follow the directions above to analyze the poem "Home" by Warsan Shire.

Activity 1: Google Jamboard: How would you describe youth migrants?

Have students share some of the words that they used to describe unaccompanied youth migrants over the course of the past two lessons. Then, ask students to think about how their descriptions compare to the ways in which pioneers on the Oregon Trail are portrayed in history books and the media. Guide students in evaluating how youth migrating from Central America could be portrayed to more accurately describe their experiences. Ask them to also consider how these portrayals would compare to how white migrants who traveled on the Oregon Trail have been historically portrayed.

Activity 2: Media Literacy Assessment

In this activity, students are asked to read and analyze two different articles related to youth migration. It is hoped that students will be able to identify dehumanizing language and portrayals that humanize Central American youth as they read.

Directions to students:

1. Read the following article published by the AP. Pay attention to word choice regarding the arrival of unaccompanied minors and their potential impact on the country. Whose voices are heard? Whose aren't? Record your responses in the student assessment handout.
 - Article: [House passes immigration bills for farm workers, 'Dreamers'](#) by Alan Farm for the *Associated Press*.
2. Now read the following article by Jaime Joyce for *Time For Kids*. What are some of the words that are used to describe young people in Honduras and their views on migration? What do the article's photos reveal about them? Whose voices are heard? Whose aren't? How might reading an article like this one provide a counternarrative or a different perspective to mainstream media portrayals of youth migrants as shown in the AP article above? Record your responses on the student assessment handout.
 - Article: [Faces of Honduras](#) by Jaime Joyce for *Time for Kids*

Activity 3: Creative Assessment

Have students complete a creative project assessment that draws on their work throughout the unit.

- [Creative Project Assessment \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Creative Project Assessment \[.docx\]](#)

Encourage students to pick a format that most speaks to their creative strengths. Options could include:

- 1) A poem about the youth migrant experience (acrostic poems, “found” poems using words and phrases from the readings and videos, Where I am From Poem, a series of haikus.
- 2) A rap or other song regarding the youth migration experience.
- 3) A letter from an unaccompanied child to a friend or family member either in the United States or back in their homeland. The letter may detail their journey, their hopes, their struggles.
- 4) An illustrated map or comic strip detailing the experiences of youth migrants (causes for leaving, struggles along the way, challenges at the border).
- 5) Students could write or film an imaginary interview between a journalist and youth migrants.
- 6) A children’s book about a young migrant (causes for leaving, struggles along the way, challenges at the border).
- 7) An imaginary journal or diary detailing a young migrant’s journey.

Alternative Assessment:

An ACTION piece: Have students write a letter to their Congressional representatives about the need to reform the asylum system based upon what they have learned in the lesson.

Closing and Homework

Students should select their creative project and begin working on it. Teachers may decide to give more class time for the projects or have students complete them at home.

It is recommended that teachers engage students in both analytical and creative assessments. Examples of both, and descriptions for both performance tasks, are included below.

- [Critical Media Literacy Assessment \(student example\) \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Critical Media Literacy Assessment \(student example\) \[.docx\]](#)
- [Creative Assessment Comic Book \(student example\) \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Creative Assessment Comic Book \(student example\) \[.docx\]](#)
- [Creative Assessment Acrostic Poem \(student example\) \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Creative Assessment Acrostic Poem \(student example\) \[.docx\]](#)
- [Creative Assessment Original Story \(student example\) \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Creative Assessment Original Story \(student example\) \[.docx\]](#)
- [Creative Assessment Poetry \(student example\) \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Creative Assessment Poetry \(student example\) \[.docx\]](#)

Students' creative works will be evaluated according to rubrics that assess student demonstration of their understanding of the causes of youth migration, what the journey is like, and what circumstances they face at the U.S.-Mexico border.

- [Rubric Examples \[.pdf\]](#)
- [Rubric Examples \[.docx\]](#)