

IMMIGRATION

M- 46

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CATEGORY: MEXICO: NOW

CONCEPTS: MIGRATION, economics, agriculture, poverty

ACTIVITY: SIMULATION DECISION MAKING: TO EMIGRATE OR TO STAY. Students are presented with the complex variables confronting a Mexican family trying to decide how to earn a living in a nation of high unemployment. Based on these variables students decide what their decisions would be in a similar case and why.

OBJECTIVES: The students will learn why Mexicans emigrate to the United States and will be able to describe the factors involved in this decision.

MATERIALS: None.

PROCEDURE: Describe to the children the following situation: The Ibañez family is a rather typical small-town Mexican family. Alberto, Juana and their three children (ages 2, 6, 12) find it very hard to make a living. They live in a farming community but most of the land belongs to large estates. Alberto sometimes finds temporary jobs planting and harvesting but since he has no specialized training he is often unemployed. Juana tends a small plot of land which produces chile peppers and beans, raises a few chickens and does laundry for the hotel in the town. Together, they just make do and cannot afford to give their children other than the basic necessities. Education is not possible since the children will have to work as soon as they are old enough. Their oldest son is already helping in the fields. They want to have a better life. They know that moving to a large city in Mexico will probably not help since many unemployed Mexicans are already there. But they have heard of many people who have gone North to the United States and have been able to earn more money. They are considering doing the same. They must also decide if they should all go, or just Alberto and/or Juana.

Now write the following considerations on the blackboard or hand out lists. The students can either individually decide what they would do and write their reasons as a short essay, or the class can be divided into small groups to discuss a decision they will then report. (If you divide into groups be sure there is a discussion leader and a student who will record and report the decision). A group can also be designated to act out the family discussion as a role playing activity.

The family has a very difficult life but is not starving and they have a small house and plot of land. If they stay, they will remain the same or suffer more difficulties. If they emigrate, they can return after several years as many Mexicans do.

VOCABULARY: deportation, work benefits, life style, unemployment, underemployment, immigration, emigration.

RELATED ACTIVITIES: Students can gain a historical perspective by:

- 1) asking their parents how and why their ancestors came to the U.S. and reporting to the class and/or
- 2) doing short reports on how and why other ethnic groups migrated in large numbers: the Irish, Africans, Finns, Poles, Vietnamese, Germans, etc., etc.