

## What Does It Mean to be “Undocumented”? Gallery Walk Lesson Plan

**Objectives:** Students will contextualize the term “undocumented,” including examining and comparing the immigration stories of Chinese and white immigrants from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and Mexican undocumented immigrants from today.

### Directions

- 1) Each group will be assigned a text and given poster directions for their assigned text. Each text complicates our notions of what it means to be “undocumented.” Though the texts are short, 1-2 pages, students will need class time to study the texts, or students can be placed in groups in a prior class and asked to read their assigned text as part of homework. Or you can make each student read all five texts for homework if you like.
- 2) After groups have made their posters, each group will pick someone in their group to be a “presenter.” Presenters will stay next to their poster and present it to others. Everyone else in the group will walk around to other posters and make comments using post-its.
- 3) Comments can include positive feedback, questions, or connections (text-text/self/world).
- 4) Debrief questions might include:
  - What information was surprising?
  - What was similar or different about the immigration experiences of Chinese and white immigrants from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and Mexican undocumented immigrants from today?
  - Were you taught the history of undocumented immigration in school? If you weren't, why do you think it was not emphasized?

### Texts:

- 1) [Reyna Grande's “The Impossible Choice My Father Had to Make”](#) – Grande's story about her father's “impossible choice”: leave children behind in Mexico or bring them with him as he attempts to cross the border, endangering them for the hope of a better future.
- 2) [Dickson Lam's “Paper Sons” \(pgs. 123-125\)](#) – Section from *Paper Sons* that discusses how Chinese immigrants in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century used fake documents to claim US citizenship.
- 3) [Alberto Ledesma's \*Diary of a Reluctant Dreamer, excerpt\*](#) – From the chapter “The Undocumented Alphabet.” Each image is based on a different letter of the alphabet and relates to what it means to be undocumented (“A”buelitos, “B”ackpay, “C”oyote).
- 4) [Aviva Chomsky's \*Undocumented, excerpt\*](#) – This discusses the immigration experiences of white immigrants in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 5) [Jesus I. Valles's “un\(documents\)”](#) – A poem that problematizes the word undocumented, arguing that those who are labeled undocumented are not actually “sin papeles,” “without papers.”

## **What Does It Mean to be “Undocumented”? Gallery Walk**

Each group will make a poster based on their assigned reading. Each reading complicates our notions of what it means to be “undocumented.” We will place these posters around the room to have a “Gallery Walk.”

### **1) Reyna Grande’s “The Impossible Choice My Father Had to Make”**

Using Reyna Grande’s story, create a poster that illustrates the “impossible choice” her father was forced to make. Your poster should show why the choice was difficult. What would be difficult about leaving his children behind? What would be difficult about bringing them with him as he crosses the border into the US?

Along with this visual representation, include a quote from this article.

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### **2) Dickson Lam’s “Paper Sons” (pgs. 123-125)**

Create a poster that illustrates a scene from this section of the book. For example, a scene could be what it was like living on Angel Island for these Chinese immigrants. Another example could be the interrogation process.

Along with this visual representation, include a quote from this section of the book.

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#### **3) Alberto Ledesma’s *Diary of a Reluctant Dreamer*, excerpt**

This excerpt comes from Ledesma’s chapter, “The Undocumented Alphabet.” Examine these images (“A,” “B,” and “C”) and create your own “letter” poster. Pick any other letter you like in the alphabet.

Follow Ledesma’s examples. There should be text as well as an image for your poster.

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#### **4) Aviva Chomsky’s *Undocumented*, excerpt**

Create a poster that shows the experience of white immigrants during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Consider the restrictions or lack of restrictions they faced in immigrating to the US. Also, what was the experience like for those white (undocumented) immigrants who did not “follow the rules”?

Along with this visual representation, include a quote from this section of the book.

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### **5) Jesus I. Valles’s “un(documents)”**

Discuss with your group what this poem is about. Pick out 3 powerful images or sections from this poem to illustrate for your poster.

For each image or section you choose, add an accompanying quote from that section of the poem.