



# The Rights of Migrants in the United States

Lesson Plan:  
Migrants in the Media

Grade Level: 9-12



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# Lesson Plan: Migrants in the Media

**Goal:** To help students understand the rights of migrants, and how the U.S. is doing in fulfilling those rights.

**Objectives:**

- Students will learn what it means to be a migrant.
- Students will gain a general understanding of the rights of migrants as outlined by U.S. law and international human rights treaties.
- Students will research and identify news articles relating to migrant rights in the U.S.
- Students will analyze news articles and other media from a human rights perspective to determine how well the U.S. is fulfilling the rights of migrants.

**Essential Question:** How is the U.S. doing in fulfilling the rights of migrants?

**Resources:**

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) – download at [www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm](http://www.unhchr.ch/udhr/lang/eng.htm)
- “The Rights of Migrants in the United States” fact sheet – download at [www.discoverhumanrights.org/toolkits.html](http://www.discoverhumanrights.org/toolkits.html)
- “Migrants in the Media” handout (found in this lesson plan)
- Chalkboard/whiteboard/flipchart and markers
- Access to the internet and other sources of print media

**Time Frame:** 2-3 class periods

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Minnesota High School Social Studies Standards:**

- **World History, I, #1:** Students will examine human rights principles and how they have been supported and violated in the late 20th century.
- **Government and Citizenship, A, #1:** Students will demonstrate the ability to use print and electronic media to do research and analyze data.
- **Government and Citizenship, B, # 1:** Students will define and provide examples of fundamental principles and core values of American political and civic life.
- **Government and Citizenship, B, # 2:** Students will examine the tension between the government’s dual role of protecting individual rights and promoting the general welfare, the tension between majority rule and minority rights, and analyze the conflict between diversity and unity which is captured in the concept “E Pluribus Unum.”
- **Geography, C, #2:** Students will provide examples of the impact of political boundaries on human behavior and economic activities.

**Note to teachers:** To prepare your students for this activity, it may be important to first discuss what it means to be a migrant, including why and how people come to engage in global migration. To obtain free and downloadable lessons, activities, handouts, worksheets, and case studies please visit [www.energyofanation.org](http://www.energyofanation.org).



# Lesson Plan: Migrants in the Media

## Activity 1: What is a Migrant?

- 1. Define.** Write the words migrant, immigrant, and emigrant on the board and ask students what they think these words mean. Gather some answers from the class and write them down on the board. Explain that the difference between emigrating and immigrating is simply about direction:
  - An **IMMIGRANT** is incoming. They have left one country and are entering another.
  - An **EMIGRANT** is outgoing. They are leaving their country to go to another.
  - **MIGRANT** is the general term. A migrant can be an immigrant or an emigrant. The United Nations defines a migrant as “any person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born...”
- 2. Brainstorm.** Next, ask the students to brainstorm a list of reasons as to why a person might want to leave one place for another and write them down on the board. Explain to your students that depending on their reasons for leaving and how they enter another country, migrants fall under a broad range of classifications such as: students, temporary workers, asylum seekers, refugees, permanent residents, and undocumented workers.

## Activity 2: What are the Rights of Migrants?

- 1. Imagine.** Ask your students to imagine that they are a migrant coming to a new country. Have the class generate a list of things that would be important to them. What would they need? What would they fear? What would they wish for? Students could work in small groups to generate more ideas. Write their ideas down on the board.
- 2. Explain.** Explain to your students that the rights of migrants are guaranteed under numerous United Nations documents including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The Rights of Migrants are based on many of the ideas the class came up with in the brainstorm. Read the following excerpt from the UDHR:

*“Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional, or international status of the country to which a person belongs.”*

The important thing to emphasize is that all migrants are entitled to basic human rights.

**Option:** Teachers may choose to provide students with copies of the UDHR and ask them to read it and choose which rights they think would be especially important to migrants.

- 3. Read.** Photocopy and distribute “The Rights of Migrants in the United States” fact sheet to the entire class. Ask the class to take 10 minutes to read the first 3 sections of the fact sheet to familiarize themselves with the rights of migrants (some of this will have already been covered in activities one and two).
- 4. Jigsaw .** The purpose of this activity is to help students become familiar with the rights of migrants as outlined by U.S. law and by international human rights treaties. Through this activity, the students will put together the pieces of the “jigsaw”, and learn from each other about how the U.S. is doing in fulfilling the rights of migrants.
  - 1) Form Groups.** Have students form groups of 2-3 (depending on the size of the class), and assign each group a sub-section to read under “Is the U.S. Fulfilling the Rights of Migrants?” For example, one group would be responsible for reading “Safety and Security”, another group would be responsible for reading “Equal Protection and Due Process”, and so on.
  - 2) Read and Choose.** Next, ask the students to take 5 minutes to read their assigned sub-section. Ask each group to choose two items to share from their sub-section that would be representative of how the U.S. is doing with respect to the right being discussed.
  - 3) Present.** After 5 minutes, ask each group to choose one spokesperson to present to the class on the definition of the right represented in their sub-section as well as the two items they chose to highlight. This should take approximately 10 minutes.



# Lesson Plan: Migrants in the Media

## Activity 3: Migrants in the Media

- 1. Research.** Give each student the “Migrants in the Media” handout. For this assignment, each student will use the internet and other print media to research and identify one news article that deals with the issue of migration in the U.S. The article must be from a reputable news source, such as: news magazines (e.g., Newsweek), newspapers (e.g., The New York Times), a government publication (e.g., from the Department of Education), and/or a non-profit publication (e.g., Human Rights Watch). Ask the students to bring in a printed copy of their chosen article. The students can use the sub-sections they discussed in class to help them guide the search for their articles. Depending on time and resources, teachers can have students research this assignment at home or in class. It is important to keep in mind that not all students may have internet access at home so it may be useful to set aside time for computer use during class.
- 2. Analyze.** Ask the students to answer in writing the following questions about their articles, and come to class ready to discuss them with their classmates. Teachers may choose to ask students to hand this assignment in as homework to be graded.

### Questions Used to Analyze Articles:

- What facts about U.S. immigration did you find in the article?
  - What opinions about immigration did you find in the article?
  - What issues related to migrant rights did you find in the article?
  - In your view, was the article advocating for or against migrant rights? Why?
  - Was the article slanted or skewed in any particular way? If so, how? Can you list any words/phrases that show the emotion contained in the article?
  - What voice was missing in the article, if any? In other words, what other perspective would have been helpful to include in the article to give you a full understanding of the issue being discussed?
  - Which of the migrant rights included in the “Rights of Migrants in the United States” fact sheet were discussed in the article?
  - What solutions were considered/proposed?
  - Write at least two questions/ideas you have for further research.
- 3. Small Group Discussion and Presentation.** Ask students to get in the same groups of 2-3 they formed previously. Ask them to take 15-20 minutes to discuss the answers to each of the questions posed in the “Migrants in the Media” assignment. After they have discussed each article, ask them to select one article that they feel is particularly effective in demonstrating the fulfillment (or lack thereof) of a particular migrant right, and prepare to paraphrase the article and analyze it for the class using the questions posed in the assignment as a guide. In addition, using their analysis of the chosen article, ask each group to answer the following question:
    - Based on what was discussed in the article, what kind of action needs to be taken to ensure that the U.S. fulfills the rights of migrants? What could the government or the community do to help make this happen?Ask them to select one spokesperson to communicate this information to the rest of the class. Once each group is ready to present on their chosen article, take approximately 25 minutes to hear from each group.
  - 4. Submit.** Following the presentation and discussion of the articles, ask students to submit their “Migrants in the Media” assignment including their printed article and the answers to the questions.

For further resources on teaching about immigration visit [www.energyofanation.org](http://www.energyofanation.org)

For further resources on teaching about human rights in the U.S. visit [www.discoverhumanrights.org](http://www.discoverhumanrights.org)



# Lesson Plan: Migrants in the Media

**Instructions:** Your assignment is to find a news article that deals with the issue of immigration in the United States. You may use electronic or print media for your research. The article must be from a reputable news source, such as: news magazines (e.g., Newsweek), newspapers (e.g., The New York Times), a government publication (e.g., from the Department of Education), and/or a non-profit publication (e.g., Human Rights Watch). Bring a printed copy of your article and the answers to the questions below to class. You will be asked to use this information further in a small group discussion and presentation.

**Recommended News Sites:**

[www.amnestyusa.org](http://www.amnestyusa.org) (be sure to add "U.S." to your search)  
[www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com) (be sure to add "U.S." to your search)  
[www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com)  
[www.detentionwatchnetwork.org](http://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org)  
[www.energyofanation.org/News](http://www.energyofanation.org/News)  
[www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com)  
[www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org) (be sure to add "U.S." to your search)  
[www.latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com)  
[www.msnbc.com](http://www.msnbc.com)  
[www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)  
[www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)

**Questions Used to Analyze Articles:**

On a separate piece of paper, answer the following questions regarding your chosen article on immigration. You may use the "The Rights of Migrants in the United States" fact sheet to help you identify the human rights issues presented in the article.

1. What facts about U.S. immigration did you find in the article?
2. What opinions about immigration did you find in the article?
3. What issues related to migrant rights did you find in the article?
4. In your view, was the article advocating for or against migrant rights? Why?
5. Was the article slanted or skewed in any particular way? If so, how? Can you list any words/phrases that show the emotion contained in the article?
6. What voice was missing in the article, if any? In other words, what other perspective would have been helpful to include in the article to give you a full understanding of the issue being discussed?
7. Which of the migrant rights included in "The Rights of Migrants in the United States" fact sheet were discussed in the article?
8. What solutions were considered/proposed?
9. Write at least two questions/ideas you have for further research.