



## **Did Things Get Better? Poetry from the Cultural Perspective of American Movement**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 13.02.09

by Robert M. Schwartz

Culture is born of background and upbringing combined with experience. Poetry is an expressive representation of culture. Taking these things into consideration, this unit will center on poetry from the perspective of the people who write it. Following a physical and an electronic map of the United States (highlighting the routes of immigration and migration taken by specific ethnic groups during specific periods in U.S. history, and stylized with photographs and snippets of verse), students will learn the art they are experiencing was inspired by struggle and triumph, change and adaptation, experience and blossoming culture. Through profiles and poetry, students will spotlight experiences of prominent poets, including African Americans in Manhattan and Chicago, Arab-Americans, Chinese immigrants in San Francisco, and more. Students' focus will be to thematically and stylistically connect the poetry with the experience that inspired it, so they may synthesize that art, literature, and poetry are reflections of life.

Students will also contemplate whether all this movement (immigration and migration) accomplished the original goal of those who migrated, which was to improve their station in life. They will ask about the experience of the migrants, did things get better? Their product will be an original book of poems, including original renditions of the styles they learn, and reflections on historical experiences, including how they connect to current day, as well as an essay describing whether they think the movement improved the station and lifestyle of the migrants, using evidence from the poetry they study.

(Recommended for English Language Arts, grades 8 and 9)

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