



## Introduction

Despite the “ethnic revival” of the 1970s, immigrant history has only slowly made its way into public school classrooms. In this seminar we approached that history from a very broad point of view: the immigrant’s search for a “usable” identity was ultimately considered such a quintessentially American theme that virtually all groups—from New England Puritans to recent Asian and Hispanic immigrants—came under consideration. The work of the seminar was focused, though, on the experience of the “new immigrants” from Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the black “migrants” who moved from the rural South to the urban-industrial North in this century.

The curriculum units produced by the seminar Fellows reflect the variety of interests they brought to the meetings as well as some of the intensity of our discussions during this hot summer. Ethnicity in America is ultimately a topic of intimate concern, linked in varying degrees to the process of personal identity formation. The Fellows discussed ways of treating this issue in their own classrooms, and through their units they have created useful models for introducing students to their own heritage and that of others. Whether concerned with the history of blacks in New Haven, ethnic humor, or the broader history of an immigrant group, each of the units stimulates *comparative* thinking rather than the parochial “insiderism” that sometimes mars work on ethnicity. The units reveal the great *variety* of ethnic experience in America and, taken together, offer a challenge to students and teachers to explore the creative possibilities of cultural diversity.

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