



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1999 Volume III: Immigration and American Life

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## **New Beginnings**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 99.03.05  
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When I was a child, my grandparents would frequently tell the story of their parents' departure from Italy, and arrival in America. What gave them the drive to overcome any obstacle and follow through with this endeavor?

For a person born in America, rights granted under the Constitution, such as freedom to work in any field, freedom to love whomever they choose, and the freedom to worship whomever and however they choose, are among the everyday issues which may be taken for granted. "America land of the free". However, for those people born elsewhere who desire to obtain American citizenship, whether coming from a heavily restricted country, or one of less opportunity, these freedoms might be found to be a treasure, overwhelming, or maybe even frightening. Yet the immigration process continues daily.

A vehicle for immersing students into the incredible process entailed in coming to America will be to put them in a first person scenario. Students will enjoy exploring the creative process by choosing and creating a character from an origin other than America, and other than their own cultural background. Through research and character work, the students may come to a greater understanding of the desire to come to America, incorporated with the wondrous different cultures that make up this "Melting Pot".

New Beginnings is a drama unit that can be applied, in a greater or lesser extent, to any age group of students. The unit can be listed in the index under such headings and sub-headings as: "Acting" "How to develop a character", "Immigration" "Acting toward America" "Drama" "Multicultural Improvisation".

Very often student actors consider building a character for a role to be more complicated than is necessary. The tendency is to rely upon the words of a script and create a persona around those words without a foundation. The goal of this unit will be to use the immigration process as a specific point of reference for the student actor to Fuso on in order to develop an in-depth, connected, and interesting character.

(Recommended for Drama and Speech, grades 9-12.)

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