NCSS Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan

Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel

by Leslie Connor

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This lesson plan is based on the book, Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel, and is useful for teaching about immigration to the United States. Students create a timeline with Miss Bridie’s life story while also learning about wants and needs. Historical photographs and other sources assist students as they analyze early immigrants’ common characteristics, reasons for moving, and challenges. Another NCSS Notable Trade Book, Coming to America: A Muslim Family’s Story, is used to compare early and modern immigration. This plan may be adapted, as needed, for grades 2-5.

Book Title
Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel by Leslie Connor (Notable, 2004)

Book Summary
Miss Bridie, an 1856 immigrant, makes an important choice before traveling to America. She brings a shovel which helps her through the many joys and challenges that she experiences while carving out a new life in America.
(Genre: Fiction)

NCSS Standards

II. Time, Continuity, & Change
b. demonstrate an ability to use correctly vocabulary associated with time such as past, present, future, and long ago; read and construct simple timelines; identify examples of change; and recognize examples of cause and effect relationships.

c. compare and contrast different stories or accounts about past events, people, places, or situations, identifying how they contribute to our understanding of the past.

IV. Individual Development & Identity
g. analyze a particular event to identify reasons individuals might respond to it in different ways.
NCSS Standards

VII. Production, Distribution, & Consumption
   b. distinguish between wants and needs.

Materials

For each group –

1. Copy of Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel
2. Clock
3. Shovel
4. Porcelain figurine
5. Butcher paper
6. Colored markers
7. Copy of Coming to America: A Muslim Family’s Story by Bernard Wolf

Objectives

• The students will be able to describe the common characteristics of an 1850s European immigrant traveling to the United States.

• The students will be able to make inferences about how and why immigrants settle in America.

• The students will be able to create a timeline using the life events of another person.

Procedures

Exploration/Introduction

1. Introduce the word immigrant and briefly explain the difference between a visitor, tourist, and immigrant. Allow time for students to ask clarifying questions and/or relate the word to their personal experiences or something they have read or heard (e.g., moving, vacations, someone they know who has moved to the United States from another country, etc.)

2. Show the students three items: a clock, a figurine, and a shovel. Ask students to talk with a partner for three to five minutes about this question:

   If you were traveling to another country as an immigrant, which item would you select to take with you and why?

3. Call on each set of partners to share their ideas with the whole class and write these on the board as a springboard for whole class discussion.

Development

1. Explain that, throughout history, people have moved to America from different places in the world. People move for many reasons; some move by choice (e.g., to have a better job, better education, or to enjoy certain freedoms), and others may have been forced to move (e.g., slavery). Many of us are descendants of people who may have moved to America hundreds of years ago. This means that one of our family members who lived many years ago (ancestors) may have come to the US from another country.
Today, I will read a book to you about someone who immigrated to the United States about 150 years ago.

2. Show the cover of the book and ask students to read the title, Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel.

3. Ask students to explore the cover, gather, and share as many clues about Miss Bridie as possible by looking at the picture.

- She has only two belongings. She is carrying her clothes in a cloth, not a suitcase. Ask students what could be inferred about her situation in life from this detail.

- There is a family at the house waving good-bye, and they look sad or worried. Ask students why the family might look sad or worried.

- Her house is small with a thatched roof; the fence is made of stone, and there is much green, pasture land around the house. Ask students what this might tell us about where she lives and why she is leaving.

- She is wearing a long plaid dress, shawl, and a straw hat. Ask students to tell us what this means about how people who traveled to the United States may have looked 150 years ago.

4. Read the first page to students. “She could have picked a chiming clock or a porcelain figurine, but Miss Bridie chose a shovel back in 1856.”

   Ask: Why do you think Miss Bridie chose a shovel back in 1856?

5. Encourage students to discuss the reasons why a person during this time might select the practicality and versatility of a shovel versus the comfort or beauty of a cherished family figurine or clock.

6. Students may brainstorm all the things for which a shovel can be used. They might also suggest that a figurine and clock could break, provide little practical value, and represent wants instead of needs.

7. Before reading the remainder of the story, ask students to listen for all the ways Miss Bridie used the shovel during her lifetime in America.
8. Read the story and stop to discuss Miss Bridie’s life journey through the theme of the shovel.

• How was her new home in New York different from her home in Europe?
• Why do you think she left her family to move to North America?
• Do you think she was able to visit her family in the old country again? Why or why not?
• Why do you think Miss Bridie and her new husband moved out of the city and into the country?
• What were some of the hardships she faced? What were some of the joys?
• How do you think Miss Bridie’s life may have been different if she had brought the chiming clock or the porcelain figurine instead of the shovel?

9. After the book has been read and discussed, ask students to work in small groups to create “Story Paths” (Appendix A) on large pieces of butcher paper. Each group should plan, interpret, and draw as many events from the book as possible. Make sure that students understand that the drawings should be in chronological order. Ask them to connect the pictures with something like a path, road, or arrows. These completed “Story Paths” will serve as timelines of the life events of Miss Bridie.

10. After all the “Story Paths” (timelines) are completed, ask each group to share their interpretations of Miss Bridie’s life journey with the whole class.

Expansion

11. Read and discuss Coming to America: A Muslim Family’s Story by Bernard Wolf.

12. Ask students to compare and contrast this modern family from Egypt and Miss Bridie.

13. Hang a large matrix on the wall and ask students to discuss the comparisons and contrasts and write them on the matrix.

• How are they different? (Possible answers) Live in different times. Egyptian family stays in New York City and the father works in a convenience store all night. Children attend school. They are originally from different areas of the world (Europe and Middle East).
• How are they similar? (Possible answers) Came to America in search of better opportunities.

14. Ask students to interview immigrants in the school and community. As each interview is shared and discussed in class, ask students to complete additional squares on the matrix (Appendix B).

15. Continue to add to the matrix as new stories are told or new books are read about immigration to the United States.
Assessment

Objective 1: The students will be able to describe the common characteristics of an 1850s European immigrant traveling to the United States.

Objective 2: The students will be able to make inferences about how and why European immigrants settled in the United States.

Assessment for Objectives 1 & 2: The students will work in groups to create a “Character Analysis” (Appendix C) of an American immigrant from Europe during the 1800s. The analysis will contain the following criteria:

- Characteristics
- Reasons for coming to the United States
- How immigrants traveled to the United States

Objective 3: The students will be able to create a timeline using the life events of another person.

Assessment for Objective 3: The “Story Paths” which were developed during the Development Phase of the lesson will be scored.

1. Brainstorm a variety of objects that might be useful to an immigrant traveling to America in history or today. Through whole class discussion, debate and evaluate the real usefulness of each object. During Writers’ Workshop, each student may plan and create an original story about an immigrant traveling to the United States with only one of the objects (i.e., like the shovel).

2. Students may write a diary, in first person, as an immigrant making preparations for travel, traveling, arriving, and living in the United States. Students should be encouraged to write rich descriptive passages with sensory words which represent sounds, smells, observations, tastes, thoughts, visions for the future, and feelings such as fears, joys, relief, fatigue, etc.

3. Place students in groups with different immigrant stories or short picture books about immigrants traveling to the United States. Place students in jigsaw groups and ask them to write and perform Reader’s Theatre scripts based on the stories. After the presentations, compare and contrast the stories in a whole group discussion.

4. *Coming to America: A Muslim Family’s Story* by Bernard Wolf was the book used in the Expansion Phase. Ask students to create a “Story Path” or timeline for the family in this book.

Suggested Extension Activities
5. Explore economics through wants and needs. Older students can debate or even research items that were necessary for the early immigrants. For younger students, the teacher may create a “Wants and Needs” T-Chart on the computer (may use Kidspiration) along with pictures of items that represent wants and needs. Students would click and drag the items to the proper place on the T-Chart. Students would print the completed T-Charts to use during a whole class discussion. The teacher would facilitate the whole class discussion to clarify misconceptions.

6. During the Expansion Phase, students may be asked to interview an immigrant in the school or community. Older students may use this information to create a *Photo Story* using *Photo Story 3* (a free downloadable program).

7. Students may compare and contrast migrations of people who have either chosen or been forced to move (e.g., Pilgrims, American slaves, European immigrants, Trail of Tears, etc.).

8. Older students may research current community, state, or national immigration. They could gather data and demonstrate their interpretations of the data through the use of graphing.

9. Students research the histories of Europe and the United States during the 1850s. What was happening in Europe and the United States during this time to cause immigrants to travel to the United States? (e.g., politics, free land in the United States, religious persecution, famine, industrialization in the United States, etc.).

10. Trace the route of immigrants who traveled from Europe to the United States (geography).

Additional Background Information, References, & Weblinks

After eighteen eighty, the flood of immigration from northern and central Europe began to fall. Now, most immigrants were coming from eastern and southern Europe — from Russia, Poland, Romania, Italy, and Greece. These new immigrants were different from those who came earlier. Most did not speak English. Most were poor farmers who had few special skills, and most had little or no education. They were, however, good workers. They did not protest working long hours for low pay, and they did not demand better working conditions. They usually refused to join labor unions or take part in strikes (Beardsley, 2005, p. 1).

**Book**

Supplementary Photographs to Use

Original source: The National Archives http://www.archives.gov/

Ellis Island Photograph for Character Analysis (Appendix C)

Weblinks


National Archives and Record Administration http://www.archives.gov/

About the Author

Janie Hubbard is currently an Adjunct Professor at the University of Montevallo in Montevallo, Alabama, while also teaching part-time at Asociacion Escuelas Lincoln in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Janie’s research interests include teacher collaboration through lesson study and social studies teaching and learning methods.

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Appendix A

Story Path

Students may either create free-form Story Paths or complete a chart somewhat like this one. Allow room for students to draw pictures underneath the captions/labels. Young students may need large paper to create larger drawings and fewer words. Teacher adaptations for this activity can be as simple or complex as needed for developmental appropriateness or to accommodate students’ needs.

She leaned on it when she was on the ship from Europe.

It carried her pack with her clothes because she did not have a suitcase.

She had it when she rented a room & got a job in New York.

She used it to dig a garden behind the shop where she worked. She sold the plants from the garden.

She used it to clear the snow in the park so she could skate. She met her husband there.

She used it to dig holes for the animal pens on the new farm.

She used it to plant apple seeds and to dig the root cellar for the apples.

Students could “predict” the next use that the shovel could have for Miss Bridie (or for her descendants).

She used it to plant a tree and flowers for her husband’s memory when he passed away.

She used it after the fire to turn the soil and plant fruits and flowers to sell.

She used it to shovel lumps of coal into the stove to warm her children and to cook bread.

She used it to pry the doctor’s buggy from the mud when her babies were born.

She used it when the rains swelled. She scooped away mud and built a bigger pond for the water.

Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel
## Appendix B

### Matrix Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of book, story, or interview</th>
<th>Original home</th>
<th>Approximate time in history</th>
<th>Possible reasons for immigrating to America</th>
<th>Challenges</th>
<th>Joys</th>
<th>Vision for the future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel</strong></td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Better job</td>
<td>Leaving family behind</td>
<td>Raising a family of her own</td>
<td>Have a better life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More money</td>
<td>Building and keeping a farm with hard work</td>
<td>Building and keeping a farm</td>
<td>Own farmland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Potato famine in Ireland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raise a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Industrialization in the U.S. Land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coming to America: A Muslim Family’s Story</strong></td>
<td>Middle East (Egypt)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Better job</td>
<td>Leaving family behind</td>
<td>Children are getting a good education</td>
<td>Learning English-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More money</td>
<td>New York is expensive</td>
<td>Keeping religious &amp; cultural traditions</td>
<td>Children will have more opportunities because of the American education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>American Schools</td>
<td>Keeping religious &amp; cultural traditions</td>
<td></td>
<td>To visit Egypt again some day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interview with Juan Martinez</strong></td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Better job</td>
<td>Leaving family behind</td>
<td>Able to send money for his mother to have good food &amp; medicine</td>
<td>American citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More money</td>
<td>Finding a good job</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learn enough English to help get a better job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Send money to family in Mexico</td>
<td>English language</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bring his whole family to America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Teacher may adapt the matrix categories or add/subtract as many frames as needed to make it developmentally appropriate or accommodate students’ needs.*
Appendix C

Character Analysis Example

Teachers may choose to ask students to create a free-form character analysis instead of one such as this. In that case, students would draw a representative character in the middle and draw arrows extending from the picture. At the end of each arrow, the student would write an inferred character trait and/or reason for coming to the United States. Teachers may adapt the character analysis as needed to make it developmentally appropriate or to accommodate students’ needs, and it may be created by small groups, partners, or individuals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young couple</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> 2 small children</td>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Clothes are plain</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moved from a cold climate</th>
<th>Late 1800s - Early 1900s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Mother’s boots</td>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Clothing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traveled on a ship</th>
<th>Want opportunities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> During these years, this was the only means of travel from Europe to the United States</td>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Few belongings in father’s bag</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigrants</th>
<th>Probably farmers or factory workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Father and children have visible paper tags</td>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Photo taken at Ellis Island &amp; people appear to be poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Photograph</th>
<th>Possibly from Scandinavia or Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ellis Island Photograph for Character Analysis</em></td>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Style of father’s hat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>They are wearing their best clothing</th>
<th>Not American</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Leather shoes, males in suits. Remaining clothing appears to be in the bag on father’s shoulder.</td>
<td><strong>Evidence:</strong> Mother has a shorter skirt than may have been common in America at that time in history. Skirt is possibly a farm garment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traveled on a ship</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
</tr>
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