RISING TIDES OF U.S. IMMIGRATION DURING THE COLD WAR

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GUIDING QUESTION:

How did Cold War foreign policies shape immigration to the U.S. during the twentieth century?

OVERVIEW

America is a nation built on and perfected by immigrants. Between 1945 and 2000, more than 3,000,000 refugees sought asylum in America. At first, the majority of refugees came from war-torn Africa, Asia, and Europe. But as the Cold War progressed and the United States sought to contain the spread of communism, large numbers of refugees made their way from Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Students will analyze a set of primary and secondary sources to determine how Cold War foreign policies shifted the demographics of the immigrant population.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to

› Describe how immigration changed from 1945 to 2000;

› Evaluate the role of U.S. foreign policy in changing the demographics of immigration; and

› Investigate a trend in U.S. immigration during the Cold War connecting historical events to immigration patterns.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

› CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

› CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7 Integrate quantitative or technical analysis (e.g., charts, research data) with qualitative analysis in print or digital text.

CONNECTIONS TO C3 FRAMEWORK

› D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.

› D2.His.2.9-12. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras.

DOCUMENTS USED

SECONDARY SOURCES

The Cold War Timeline (1945–1991) Infographic
VFW Southern Conference
https://vfwsouthernconference.org/the-cold-war-timeline-infographic/

U.S. Immigration Trends
Migration Policy Institute
https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/us-immigration-trends#source

TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

› Rising Tides of U.S. Immigration during the Cold War handout

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

› Make one copy of the Rising Tides of U.S. Immigration during the Cold War handout for each student.

› Organize students into pairs.

PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE: ANALYZING IMMIGRATION PATTERNS (45 MINUTES)

› Organize students into pairs and distribute one copy of the Rising Tides of U.S. Immigration during the Cold War handout to each student.

› Read the Background Information as a group. Direct students to design questions to investigate the Cold War based on the reading.

› Facilitate a class discussion on patterns of immigration in U.S. history before 1945. Responses could include references to the Alien & Sedition Acts (1790), Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), Immigration Act of 1921, National Origins Acts of 1924, quota system, nativism, Red Scare, etc.

　» *Who was at an advantage to immigrate to the U.S. before World War II? Who was at a disadvantage? Why?*

　» *How could World War II impact these patterns?*

　» *After World War II, what was the purpose of the policy of containment? How might that impact immigration?*

　» *To what extent did the U.S. policy of containment affect immigration?*

› Project a copy of the The Cold War Timeline (1945–1991) Infographic for students to view.

　» *How did these events impact immigration patterns to the United States?*

› Assign each pair of students to a nation listed in the Rising Tides of U.S. Immigration handout.

　» Direct students to research immigration to the U.S. during the Cold War. Students will complete the Cold War Quick Search Organizer, build an Immigration Bar Chart, and explain to the class key events both in the United States and in the home nation driving these immigration patterns.

　» **Teacher Tip**: The nations with an asterisk (*) can be assigned to pairs of students who need an additional challenge.

CONNECTIONS

A large portion of the American population is comprised of or descended from immigrants. Waves of immigration have influenced the nation politically, socially, and economically. This book features lessons on the influence of Japanese Americans and land ownership rights, as well as Chinese Americans and their contributions toward challenging "separate but equal" education policies.

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

› Students can present their findings to the class through written, oral, or electronic formats.

› Lead a synthesis discussion with students:

  » *What factors pulled immigrants to the United States during the Cold War?*

  » *What factors pushed immigrants to the United States during the Cold War?*

  » *How did the Cold War impact the composition of the American people? What are the economic, social, and political impacts of these changes?*

  » *How did Cold War foreign policies shape immigration to the U.S. during the twentieth century?*

STUDENTS INTERESTED IN THIS TOPIC MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN RESEARCHING THE FOLLOWING FOR AN NHD PROJECT

› Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)

› Immigration and Nationality Act (1965)

› Operación Pedro Pan/Operation Peter Pan (1960–1962)

› Vietnam "Boat People"

To access a PDF containing all of the sources and materials to complete this lesson plan, go to:

WWW.NHD.ORG/250

EDSITEment!
RELATED RESOURCES

Lesson Plan: Civil Rights and the Cold War
https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/civil-rights-and-cold-war

Lesson Plan: The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: The Missiles of October
https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/cuban-missile-crisis-1962-missiles-october

Lesson Plan: The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and Escalation of the Vietnam War
https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/gulf-tonkin-resolution-and-escalation-vietnam-war

Lesson Plan: The Korean War (1950–1953)
https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/korean-war-1950-1953

Curriculum: The Origins of the Cold War, 1945–1949
https://edsitement.neh.gov/curricula/origins-cold-war-1945-1949

RISING TIDES OF U.S. IMMIGRATION DURING THE COLD WAR

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The United States of America is a nation built and perfected by generations of immigrants. Some came seeking opportunities and freedom. Others were brought to the country against their will; and still more came seeking refuge from wars and political persecution. Historians typically group immigrants to the United States into four waves. The first wave consisted mostly of western Europeans and enslaved people of African descent who established the original 13 colonies. The second wave, in the mid-nineteenth century came primarily from Ireland and Germany. After the American Civil War, the source of immigration shifted to southern and eastern Europe and China as industry and railroad construction boomed.

Each wave of immigration was also accompanied by anti-immigrant attitudes. This resulted in the United States government passing laws to exclude immigrants based on race and other attributes deemed "undesirable." In 1924, Congress passed the Johnson-Reed Act, which established quotas as a means to determine immigration eligibility and barred all immigration from Asia. The **quotas**[1] provided immigration visas to two percent of the total number of people of each nationality in the United States as of the 1890 national census, so they heavily favored immigration from western Europe. This law remained in effect for over 40 years.

While the number of immigrants entering the U.S. plummeted during the Great Depression and World War II, after the war, **refugees**[2] from Europe and countries absorbed by the Soviet Union again began to flow into the United States. Congress passed stop gap measures extending earlier discriminatory national origins quotas, but allowed for the **parole**[3] of individuals from Hungary (1956–1957), Cuba (1959–1962), and China (1962).

In the aftermath of World War II, the Cold War set the stage for a period of geopolitical tension, which divided the world. President Harry S. Truman promoted a doctrine of **containment**,[4] which sought to stem the spread of communism. This led to political and social upheavals in Latin America, Asia, and the Middle East and ultimately ended the quota system to accommodate refugees from these areas.

To meet the rising tide of immigration, Congress passed the Hart-Celler Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 to replace the national origins system. This legislation gave priority to reunifying families, persons seeking employment, and refugees. According to U.S. Census statistics, the number of immigrants increased fourfold between 1960 and 2000 from 9.7 million to 44.4 million.[5]

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[1] Quota: a fixed minimum or maximum number of a particular group of people allowed to do something, such as immigrants to enter a country.

[2] Refugee: a person who has been forced to leave his or her country to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

[3] Parole: the allowance of an individual, who may be inadmissible or otherwise ineligible for admission into the United States, to enter into the United States for a temporary period.

[4] Containment: the action or policy of preventing the expansion of a hostile country or influence.

[5] Jynnah Radford and Luis Noe-Bustamante, "Facts on U.S. Immigrants, 2017," Pew Research Center, updated June 3, 2019, accessed July 30, 2020. https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2019/06/03/facts-on-u-s-immigrants.

RISING TIDES OF U.S. IMMIGRATION DURING THE COLD WAR (CON'T)

COLD WAR IMMIGRATION INQUIRY ACTIVITY

Each group of students will be assigned to one of the following countries. Circle the country you are assigned:

LATIN AMERICA	EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA	MIDDLE EAST	EUROPE
Chile	Cambodia*	Afghanistan	Czechoslovakia
Cuba*	China	Iran	(Czech Republic)
Dominican Republic	Korea	Iraq*	East Germany
Guatemala*	Laos*	Lebanon*	Hungary
Haiti*	Vietnam		Poland
Nicaragua*			

Part A: Using the data provided by the Migration Policy Institute, create a bar graph showing how the number of immigrants changed from 1960 until 2000 for your assigned country. Be sure to add appropriate scales and labels on the x- and y-axes.

To find these numbers,

› Go to https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/us-immigration-trends#source.
› Select Countries of Birth, 1960–2018.
› Select the nation from the drop-down menu on the right.

Part B: Conduct research into the history of that country during the Cold War. Complete the Cold War Quick Search Organizer.

Part C: Synthesize your research. Prepare to present your research to the class, explaining which factors drove these changing patterns of immigration to the U.S. Be sure to reference specific events in the history of the home nation as well as U.S. policies. Present one primary source to the class that provides evidence for this pattern of immigration in your presentation.

RISING TIDES OF U.S. IMMIGRATION DURING THE COLD WAR (CON'T)

IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES, 1960–2000

Immigration from: _____

1960　　1970　　1980　　1990　　2000
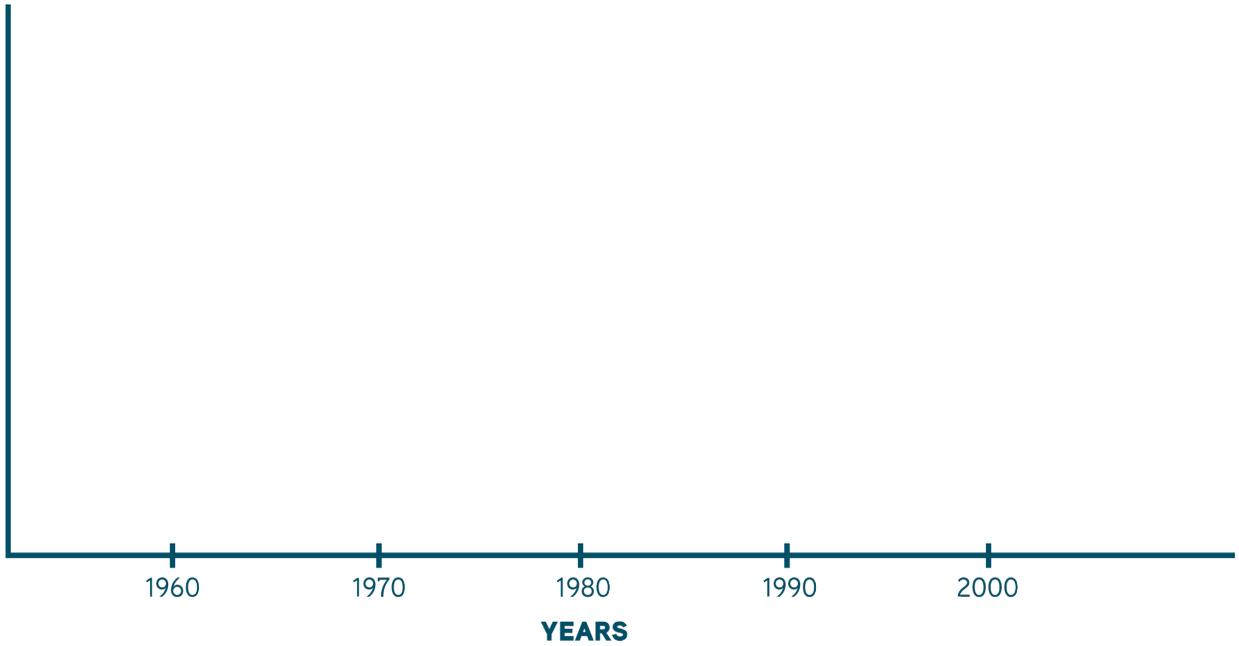
YEARS

COLD WAR QUICK SEARCH ORGANIZER

WHERE? (Country and Region)	
WHEN? (Years)	
WHO? (Key Leaders or Figures)	
WHY? (Did the U.S. get involved? Why or why not?)	
WHAT? (What actions did the U.S. take?)	
WHAT? (What was the outcome?)	
PRIMARY SOURCE(S)	
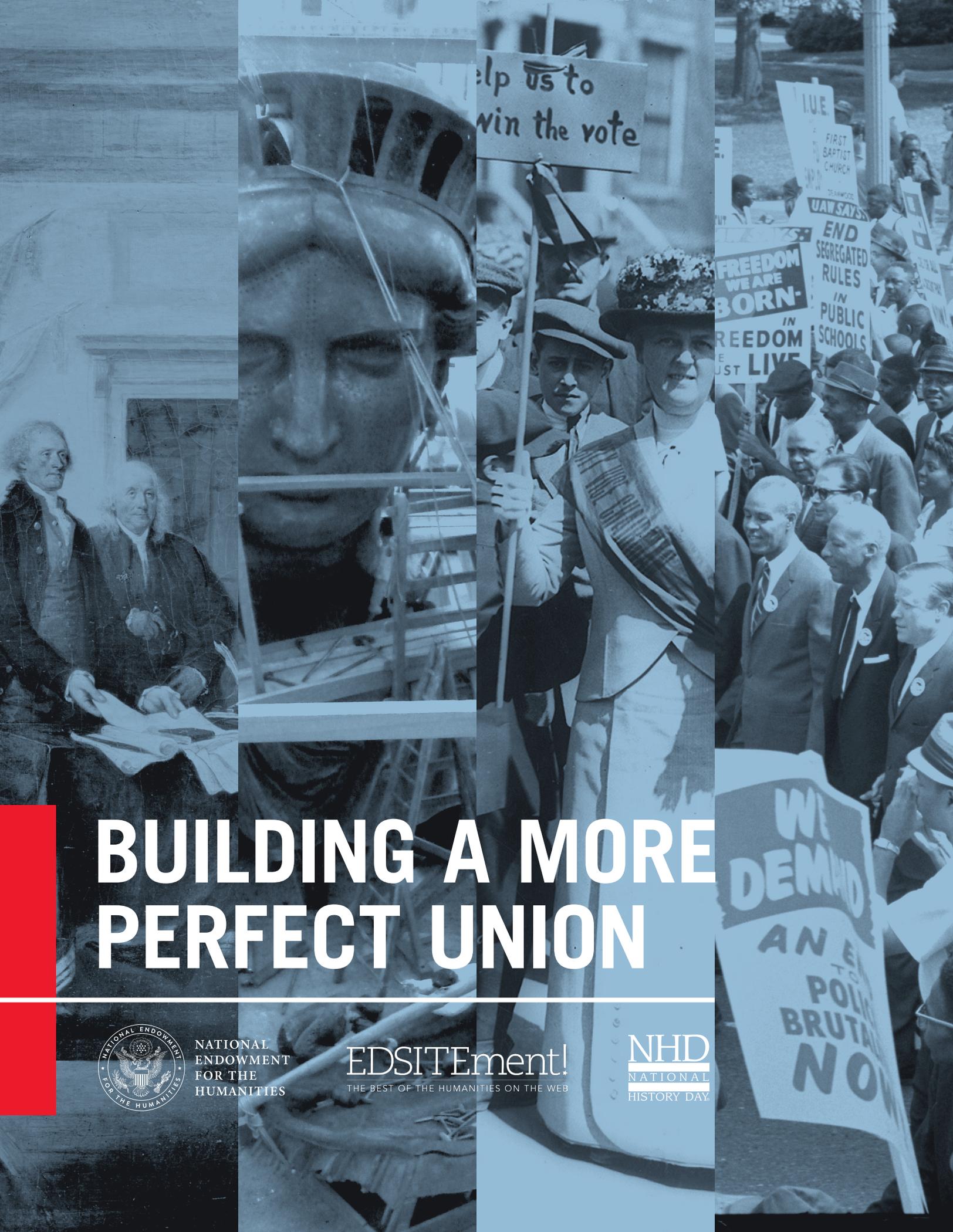
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