

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

WORDS  
OF CHANGE

# IMMIGRATION

POWERFUL VOICES,  
INSPIRING IDEAS

ANIK KHAN



# ABOUT THIS BOOK

Centering the immigrant perspective, this work assembles quotes from actors, musicians, politicians, novelists, poets, and others. We see inspiration for action, insights into economic realities, celebrations of human dignity, fights for human rights, discussions describing generational conflicts, fears of disappointing family, relief when some safety is attained, and celebrations of cultural traditions. A brief biographical note for each person quoted gives context to their words and provides the reader with a launching point for further inquiry.

**Voices include:** Edwidge Danticat, Zadie Smith, Nicki Minaj, JFK, Rashida Tlaib, Wyclef Jean, Yo-Yo Ma, Padma Lakshmi, Zendaya, Roy Choi, Megan Rapinoe, Sheryl Luna, Sundar Pichai, Rupri Kaur, Trevor Noah, and many more.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Anik Khan** is a hip-hop artist whose experience as an immigrant informs his music and is the essence of his musical persona. His TEDx talk, “Finding Your Mustard Oil,” explores the positive effects of spotlighting niche cultures. Anik is the subject of “Street Level,” an episode of PBS’s NAACP Image Award-nominated documentary series *In the Making*. Anik is also an entrepreneur whose ventures include NYC’s Kolkata Chai Co. as well as a series of successful capsule clothing pop-ups. He’s been profiled in *Paper* magazine, *Esquire*, *New York Magazine*, *Teen Vogue*, and on *All Things Considered*. Anik has collaborated with a variety of other artists, from comedian Hasan Minhaj to musicians such as Jidenna and Burna Boy. Check out [WeSoForeign.com](http://WeSoForeign.com) to learn more.

# A NOTE TO EDUCATORS

*Immigration: Powerful Voices, Inspiring Ideas* (Words of Change series) is a collection of quotes that were gathered to highlight the immigrant experience across a broad representation of experiences and voices. This curated collection highlights what it means to be an immigrant, how it feels to belong to more than one home, what tough choices are made to be safe, and how human dignity is ever-present in the immigrant's story and knowledge. There are many launching points for inquiry and instruction in this book. Teachers can become learners alongside their students, as everyone examines and researches more about the people quoted and represented. Opportunities for oral history or photographic essay projects emerge. Partnerships with local museums and municipal offices are apparent if one would like to pursue that route. **Frankly put, America is a nation of immigrants, so the possibilities of using this book in your classroom are varied, exciting, and dynamic.** This educator's guide situates you to begin to consider the ways in which this book can enhance your students' and your understandings about immigration and the immigrant experience.

Another aspect of this book worth noting for the classroom is that the collection initiates inquiry on its own. Students can learn more about those included through both literature and nonfiction study; students can use quotes to initiate a variety of persuasive essay topics; students can create a music library for their class from the myriad of musicians included; moreover, students can examine the economic and job roles of individuals quoted in the book, or turn their attention to an examination of their own communities' immigrant economic history, focusing on areas of interest from local hair salons, restaurants, and law offices, to family histories. Since this book provides glimpses into the human condition repeatedly, teachers are afforded an array of creative ways to highlight engagement and learning about immigration. Students can study the complex topic of immigration and act to become informed, compassionate citizens of change.

Below are resources for teachers. Within the links provided, you will easily find lesson plans, articles, primary sources, handouts, and further ideas that will work for you and your students. Every suggested idea can also be changed to address specific quotes and people from the book.



# TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

## **Pathways to Citizenship: History and Primary Source Analysis**

- What does the Constitution say about citizenship?
- How does one become a citizen? How do these laws change from nation to nation?

## **The Immigrant Experience and Perspective: Storytelling and Narrative Writing**

- Why do people risk their lives to come to the United States of America?
- What are the stories of immigrant groups who have come to the United States of America?
- What country's story would I like to examine?
- What are my connections to citizenship? What is my family's history?

## **The History of Immigration and Relocation in the United States of America**

- What is the story of immigration in America?
- How has America treated different immigrant groups throughout history?
- What group(s) do I see myself represented within? What groups are represented in my community?
- How have different immigrant groups been treated in America?
- How does a society balance protecting its borders with protecting human rights?

## **Adjusting to a New Home: Belonging in Two Worlds**

- How does migration impact both migrants and those they leave behind?
- How do people become acculturated into their new homelands? And how does the treatment of newcomers impact their sense of belonging?
- What traditions, art, food, and vitality come to a country when newcomers arrive? What can people do to welcome newcomers?
- What do newcomers do to stay fulfilled and happy in their new homes?

## **Global Immigration and Current Events**

- What are important issues to discuss about immigration today? Why must people seek asylum?
- How can I become a better global citizen?
- In what ways can we reduce the need for immigration? How can I help?
- What initiates a refugee crisis?

### Art Education and Immigration

- What do visual representations teach me about immigration?
- What ways do I deepen my understanding of a culture through understanding art and music history?
- What music and art from around the world am I drawn to explore?

### Thematic Poetry and Immigration

- Why is poetry used to express the experiences of immigrants? What of my own experience can I present in a poem?
- How will listening to and reading poetry enhance my ability to understand someone else's experience?

## PRE-READING ACTIVITIES AND READING ACTIVITIES

### Pathways to Citizenship: History and Primary Source Analysis

- Divide students into groups, assigning relevant aspects of the Constitution to analyze for precedent, law, content, and context. Have students report back to the class with their findings. This could be accompanied with a study of relevant Supreme Court rulings. For some starting examples of Constitutional resources visit the Library of Congress ([here](#)).
- The class could view Netflix's Documentary *Out of Many, One*. This film follows the stories of five immigrants who are on their journey to becoming United States citizens. Students could then select a person quoted in the book to research. What is this person's relation to immigration and citizenship? Students could present their findings in a gallery walk.
- Test yourself: Students can learn the process of becoming a citizen. The New York Historical Society catalogues a lot of useful information for you and your students. Take a sample quiz from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services naturalization exam. How do you all do? At the Citizenship Project ([here](#)), students can create visual maps explaining the path to citizenship in the United States. This visual representation can also include hazards and roadblocks any newcomer seeking citizenship might encounter along the path to citizenship.



## **The Immigrant Experience and Perspective: Storytelling and Narrative Writing**

- Consider inviting members of the school or local community into your classroom to tell their story of immigration. If able, students could identify potential members of the community they could interview for an oral history project. See tips for how to conduct an oral history project about immigration (including sample parent letter) from the Library of Congress ([here](#)).
- To broaden students' understandings of why so many people want to move to the United States, have students review data from Gallup. This article also serves as a great way to discuss how data is collected and how researchers infer possible implications from data ([here](#)). Students could use this information to research a group missing from Gallup's study. Students could also select a quote they were drawn to from the book and research the corresponding immigration data for that group.

## **The History of Immigration and Relocation in the United States of America**

- Either before or while reading the book, students can learn more about the history of immigration in the United States. Let students select an immigrant group of interest: African, Chinese, German, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Mexican, Native American, Polish/Russian, Puerto Rican/Cuban, and Scandinavian. Students can then present their findings, write a paper, or create a performance. Lesson ideas, activities, and graphic organizers for these regions can be found at the Library of Congress ([here](#)).

\*This is a particularly important resource for distinguishing the Black and indigenous experiences. Students might want to consider a research project on Hawaiian or Alaskan native communities and how those two states have unique immigration stories of their own.

- An in-depth analysis of one immigrant group's story, the Chinese, could serve as a shared lesson for the whole class, and then students could choose geographic areas of interest to study on their own or in groups. See the New York Historical Society for a robust collection of lesson plans, activities, and resources ([here](#)).

## **Adjusting to a New Home: Belonging in Two Worlds**

- Imagining a story that accompanies an image from the Library of Congress resources referenced above, students could write letters to fictional loved ones left behind. After this activity, students can consider real stories taken from letters Irish immigrants wrote after the famine. See Re-Imagining Migrations resources [here](#).

### **Art Education and Immigration**

- Have students examine a painting to understand any number of topics related to immigration: the American Dream; realistic and unrealistic depictions of migration; the story of a journey; hidden stories; and side stories. The National Gallery of Art has curated images for this activity, [here](#).

### **Thematic Poetry: Immigration**

- This book includes two notable poets, Sheryl Luna and Rupi Kaur. An entire mini-unit on poetry and immigration could be crafted in relation to this book. Students could consider writing their own poetry about immigration. See the Poetry Foundation ([here](#)) and the Academy of American Poets's Poetry Foundation ([here](#)) for curated poems thematically addressing migration and immigration.

## **POST-READING ACTIVITIES**

### **The Immigrant Experience and Perspective: Storytelling and Writing**

- For powerful stories about immigration experiences from other teenagers, see PBS News Hour Extra ([here](#)). This activity educates students on specific resources libraries have for immigrants. Consider a post reading activity where students learn about what their local libraries do to assist immigrants. Students can research ways to become more involved in their communities.
- Music is a wonderful way to investigate and celebrate the influence of immigrant cultures in America. The Smithsonian Institute has a fabulous collection students can sample. Writing and art projects can be inspired from these resources. This music can also serve to enhance presentations, play during a celebration, or have in your classroom during appropriate working times. Consider beginning with Smithsonian's Folkways Recordings ([here](#)).
- Immigration stories and studies could not be complete without a consideration of food and cuisine. Consider ways in which your students can explore food from around the world in their communities. The Kennedy Center provides good guidelines and resources for creating a classroom cookbook. This is a great resource to gather ideas to cater specifically to your students ([here](#)).



## Global Immigration, Current Events, and Debate

- Familiarize students with current events occurring globally. Students can consider how global immigration is tied to climate change, poverty, war, and human rights violations. The class can read and review current global immigration stories and social justice issues related to asylum seekers, refugees, and family separation at borders. See Facing History for more resources ([here](#)).
- After examining immigration from many angles, students can decide critical issues to debate. For ideas on how to successfully engage students in meaningful debate, see PBS News Hour Extra ([here](#)).
- Students might be interested in understanding more about terms and issues they are hearing in today's news. For more clarity and understanding about DACA and undocumented immigrants, see PBS News Hour Extra ([here](#)).
- Help students understand immigration trends occurring in the United States today. This work could be paired with statistical analysis in math courses as well. Have students examine the current data on population numbers in the United States. The New York Times offers a good launching point with this article ([here](#)).

## TAKE ACTION

Students will need ways to consolidate what they have learned and felt during this work. Be sure to provide students opportunities to continue their study, curiosity, inquiry as well as ways to take action to support others and change the world.

- Students can write their local and state officials about what they have learned and their ideas for further action.
- Students can consider inviting in guest speakers from the school or community to share their stories.  
Students can select a memoir or novel to read that centers the immigrant experience.
- Research an organization doing meaningful work and have a classroom fundraiser for them.





### **About the Author of this Guide**

Monica Rowley has been teaching for sixteen years. She has taught in Honolulu, Brooklyn, and now Philadelphia. She is the recipient of various grants and fellowships, including summer study at the Library of Congress, a Gilder Lehrman grant for study at Stanford, and a National Endowment for the Humanities grant for study at the East West Center. Recently, Rowley has won grants to study at the Bread Loaf School of English for three summers and was named a 2020 Northwestern University Distinguished Secondary Teacher, a national award. Rowley is also a poet, and her work can be found in various literary journals. She is a fellow at the Academy for Teachers and a member of the Bread Loaf Teacher Network, and she believes she would not still be teaching without the support of these two organizations who do all they can to support educators. Rowley has an M.A. in Asian Religions from the University of Hawaii, Manoa and a M.S. in Secondary English Education from the University of Pennsylvania.

