

## **“Immersion” Lesson Plan**

### **Lesson Plan**

**Themes:** English as a Second Language (ESL), school, math, bullying

### **Common Core State Standards (Grades 9-12)**

#### **Grades 9-10**

##### Writing

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

##### Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

##### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

6. Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

#### **Grades 11-12**

##### Writing

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

##### Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

##### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

6. Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

## “Immersion” Lesson Plan

**Film Title:** *Immersion*

**Running time:** 14 minutes

**Brief Synopsis:**

Ten-year-old Moises has just immigrated to California from Mexico. He doesn't speak English, but he's good at math, so he hopes to do well on his first math test in the USA. **Immersion** plunges its audience into the visceral experience of a child who cannot understand his teacher. (Richard Levien, USA, 14 min.)

**Objectives**

- Students will discuss the difficulties that non-English speakers face in the classroom
- Students will discuss how bullying affects other students
- Students will generate ideas for helping Moises and other struggling students succeed
- Students will discuss the fairness of our current school systems in teaching non-English speaking students
- Students will critically analyze the elements of the film.

**Vocabulary**

Immersion – being surrounded by something, such as another language

Ethnicity – a cultural group

Equity - fairness

Refugee – someone leaving their country for safety

Acculturation – adopting new customs or a new culture

Assimilate – to become similar to one's environment

Naturalization – the process of a foreigner becoming a citizen

Nativism – the policy favoring established residents of a place instead of immigrants

Oppression – the act of being kept down or treated unfairly

**Before Viewing Activities**

- List and discuss some of the struggles that children who migrate to the USA face in the classroom.
- Ask if anyone has ever struggled understanding another language or noticed another student struggling with language.
- Review the questions with students so they have some sense of what to look for during the film.

**During Viewing**

After Moises and Gerardo talk about skipping the test and going to get ice cream, pause the film.

Ask students to discuss with a partner and predict if Moises will skip the test. What will happen to him in the short term and long term if he skips the test? What would you do?

**After Viewing Questions**

Have students discuss or write answers to some or all of the following questions.

1. How would you describe Moises' academic and social skills?
2. Why do you think the director chose to show the words in the math problem floating around?
3. Why do you think the teacher's voice is distorted when we first hear Moises listening to her? How do you think the filmmakers made her voice sound that way?
4. How did Moises feel after he repeated “40” several times? How could the teacher and other students have supported him more in class?
5. Why couldn't Moises take the test in Spanish? Do you think that students should be allowed to take standardized tests in other language? Why or why not?
6. What was interesting about the Principal's conversation with the janitor?
7. Why did Moises stop playing kickball?
8. What was significant about Enrique throwing trash on the ground in front of Moises' brother Luis?
9. What happened in the flashback that Moises has when he was in the bathroom considering skipping the math test? What do you think the purpose was of the flashback?

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10. Where was the fence scene supposed to be? How do you think the filmmakers filmed the fence scene?
11. Why did Moises choose to do the math test? What would you have done?
12. Do you think Moises will do well on the test? What do you think his choice to take the test suggests about his future?
13. Was Ms. Peterson a good teacher? Why or why not?
14. What could have made her a better teacher? Why didn't she do these things?
15. Why do you think the filmmakers made this film?

### Writing Prompts

1. What do you think will happen to Moises in the next few years? Support your viewpoint with reasons from what you know about Moises, his family and his school.
2. What do you think other students could have done to help Moises? What can you do to help students who struggle with language or academics at your school? What can you do to stop bullies from teasing these students?
3. How do you think the current laws about testing English Language Learners help or hinder their progress academically and in their future careers? (Have students research current policies in their state and other states.)
4. Do you think this is an important story to share? Why or why not? What can we learn from this film?
5. How accurate was the film in portraying the experience of an immigrant? Which parts were most accurate and which parts were inaccurate? (Have students research immigrants' experiences through books, internet, interviews.)

### Film elements

1. What visual and other elements did the filmmakers use to tell the story?
2. Do you think the film was effective? Why or why not?
3. What can be learned from this film?
4. **Sound and image:** questions to help pupils see how important sound is in the interpretation of moving images.
  - a. What kind of music was used in the film? What feelings and images did the music evoke as you watched the film?
  - b. Were there any times when the sound was not natural sound (what we would normally hear)? Why did the filmmaker use these sound effects?
  - c. Was there a time when the filmmaker used no sound? What kind of effect did the silence have?
5. **Shots and sequences:** questions to draw attention to the editing process.
  1. What kind of shots were used in the film (close-ups, wide shots, medium shots)
  2. Can you think of a time when a close-up was used effectively? What about a wide shot? What would the film have been like if the editor had used a different shot there (e.g. had used a wide shot instead of a close-up).
6. **Who made it and why:** questions to get students thinking about where a film comes from and whose interests it may be serving.
  - a. Was it a cinema film or a TV program? Was it fact or fiction? Who was it for? What was it about?
  - b. Who made the film? Who owns it? Why might it have been made? What roles were involved in making it?
  - c. What difference does it make who made the film and why they made it?

### Extension Activity

Charades - Have students act out the following words without using any language.

Immigrant, Citizen, Illegal, Border, Bilingual, Foreigners

Discuss the importance of language in school and society for communicating with others. What would be the most difficult for you in school and outside of school if you didn't speak English?

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### **Related Books**

Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan

The Circuit by Francisco Jimenez

Breaking Through by Francisco Jimenez

Reaching Out by Francisco Jimenez

Sisters by Gary Paulsen

Tongue-Tied: The Lives of Multilingual Children in Public Education by Otto Santa Ana

City Schools and the American Dream by Pedro Noguera

*If your students produce any work based on this film, please consider sending us samples for our files, to Richard Levien, [richard.levien@gmail.com](mailto:richard.levien@gmail.com) or 7 Capp Street, San Francisco, CA 94103.*

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### **Director’s Statement (why we made the film)**

*We should replace bilingual education with immersion in English so people learn the common language of the country and they learn the language of prosperity, not the language of living in a ghetto.* - Newt Gingrich, March 31, 2007

How to educate new arrivals in the USA is a hotly debated topic. But the debate rarely considers the personal stories of new immigrants. Three years ago, producer Zareen Levien was volunteering in a 5th grade classroom. For months a boy sat at the back, not participating at all. Like 25% of Californian children, he was an English Language Learner (ELL). He had just arrived from Mexico and didn’t speak any English. The teacher was excellent, but didn’t speak Spanish. In a public school class with 30 students, she had little time to spend with him.

California’s policy of “structured English immersion” allows this boy only 1 year of additional English language instruction. After that, he’s expected to be at the same level as his classmates. Research indicates that it takes 5-7 years to develop academic English fluency.

"Immersion" shows a bright boy who, for no fault of his own, is sinking. The film aims to start conversations about educating immigrant children, and to give people who may have no experience of trying to learn in another language, an insight into how difficult this can be.

### **Resources for ELL**

1. For teachers: **Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD)** is a model of professional development in the area of language acquisition and literacy. The strategies and model promote English language acquisition, academic achievement, and cross-cultural skills. GLAD was developed and field tested for nine years in the Fountain Valley School District and is based on years of experience with integrated approaches for teaching language. Tied to standards, the model trains teachers to provide access to core curriculum using local district guidelines and curriculum. For more information, see <http://www.projectglad.com>
2. Colorín Colorado is a free web-based service that provides information, activities and advice for educators and Spanish-speaking families of English language learners (ELLs). Colorín Colorado is an educational initiative of WETA, the flagship public television and radio station in the nation’s capital. Major funding comes from the American Federation of Teachers, with additional support from the National Institute for Literacy and the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. For more information, see <http://www.colorincolorado.org>

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### After Viewing Questions Answered

1. *How would you describe Moises’ academic and social skills?*  
Moises enjoys math, and he is the only one in the class to solve the difficult practice problem. He is also skilled at the arithmetic problems on the real test until he gets to the word problems. Moises is resourceful and advocates for himself by asking the teacher to get a test in Spanish. He also perseveres through difficulties by taking the math test instead of skipping school with Gerardo. He struggles with making friends, since many of the students don’t speak Spanish and tease him about his poor English skills.
2. *Why do you think the director chose to show the words in the math problem floating around?*  
To show that Moises can’t read English. To him, the words just look like a jumble of letters.
3. *Why do you think the teacher’s voice was distorted when we first hear Moises listening to her? How do you think the filmmakers made her voice sound that way?*  
To show that Moises can’t understand spoken English, except for a few words. The filmmakers had the teacher speak normally, then afterwards they cut up the words into syllables and re-arranged the order of them, so that parts of words sounded familiar but it was hard to tell what she was saying.
4. *How did Moises feel after he repeated “40” several times? How could the teacher and other students have supported him more in class?*  
He feels confused and embarrassed. The other students could have refrained from laughing when he clearly didn’t understand the question. The teacher could have asked someone to translate her question into Spanish or she could have looked at his paper and explained what he did to the class herself.
5. *Why couldn’t Moises take the test in Spanish? Do you think that students should be allowed to take standardized tests in other languages? Why or why not?*  
At the time of writing, California has 1.6 million English Learner children. No Child Left Behind imposes a mandatory duty on states to ensure that its academic testing of English Learners is “valid and reliable”, and where practicable “in the language and form most likely to yield accurate data on what such students know”. But the State of California has official tests in English only. At least 9 states - New York, Texas, Colorado, Delaware, Kansas, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon and Pennsylvania - do offer tests in other languages.  
Answers may vary. They may say that students should be allowed to take subject matter tests in their native language to display their knowledge more accurately. Or students should have to take the test in English so that they can be compared to other English-speaking students and so that they are measured on their ability to participate in American society and job market with English.
6. *What was interesting about the Principal’s conversation with the janitor and why?*  
He speaks to the janitor in Spanish but tells Ms. Peterson that the school needs to speak to the students in English.
7. *Why did Moises stop playing kickball?*  
The rules had been changed to “no tagging” today, so Moises is called “out” even though he tagged up. Moises didn’t understand because he doesn’t speak English.
8. *What was significant about Enrique throwing trash on the ground in front of Moises’ brother Luis?*  
Discrimination exists between Latinos that can and cannot speak English.
9. *What happened in the flashback that Moises has when he was in the bathroom considering skipping the math test? What do you think the purpose was of the flashback?*  
Moises and his mother are crossing the border from Mexico to California. It is an indication that he/his family traveled very far and sacrificed a lot to have the opportunity to live in the US and go to school. Moises chooses to go to class even though he won’t understand the questions, partly because he and his mother have worked so hard to get here.
10. *Where was the fence scene supposed to be? How do you think the filmmakers filmed the fence scene?*  
The scene is supposed to be at or near the border with Mexico. Because the film had a low budget, the scene had to be filmed closer to San Francisco, where the filmmakers lived. They found a landfill in Livermore, which had a fence, and they added barbed wire to the top.

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11. *Why did Moises choose to do the math test? What would you have done?*

Many answers here! Because he and his mother have sacrificed so much to be in the US and getting an education here. Because he does not want to disappoint his family. Because he realizes that it is the right thing to do.

12. *Do you think Moises will do well on the test? Why or why not? If not, do you think it means that he is not good at math?*

Probably not (this particular test anyway), because the test is mostly word problems that he doesn't understand. But he is good at math and would do well if it was in Spanish, so the test result doesn't reflect how good at math he is.

13. *Was Ms. Peterson a good teacher? Why or why not?*

Some people say yes, because she keeps trying to help Moises. Others say no, because she lacks many of the strategies for teaching English Language Learner students.

14. *What could have made her a better teacher? Why didn't she do these things?*

There are many resources available to help teachers become better at teaching English Language Learners, but they take time and money to implement, and it is very hard for individual teachers to proactively seek these programs out, when they are already overwhelmed by their work. An example program is <http://www.projectglad.com/>. There is also information at <http://www.colorincolorado.org>.

15. *Why do you think the filmmakers made this film?*

To try to raise awareness of what it is like when you don't understand what your teacher is saying. We wanted to really draw the audience in, which is why we made a fiction film rather than a documentary – in fiction it is a little easier to draw the audience in to the perspective of the main character.