



**American Immigration Law Foundation
Immigration Curriculum Center Lesson Plan**

***Behind the Mountains*
by Edwidge Danticat**

Grade Level: High School (10th – 12th grade)

About the Book: Celiane Esperance lives in the Haitian countryside with her mother, Manman, and her brother, Moy. All have been patiently waiting to join their father, who has been living and working in Brooklyn, New York, trying to raise money and establish paperwork for his family to leave Haiti. When Celiane receives a journal from her teacher for her excellent schoolwork, she decides to record her thoughts on the events that take place around her as her family prepares to move to America. Through her writing, the reader is introduced to her family and all of the places that they visit, including Port-au-Prince during election time, where a bomb nearly kills Celiane and her mother. Their struggles in Haiti come to a close as they travel to meet her father in New York at Christmastime. Now their new struggles begin, as they have to become accustomed to American life.

Goal: To teach secondary students the value of immigration. Increase student awareness of the adjustments faced by immigrants.

Objectives: Students will develop their reading, writing, research, discussion, and literary response skills.

Specifically students will:

- Research Haiti and its history, Haitian culture, and Haitian immigration.
- Read [*Behind the Mountains*](#) by Edwidge Danticat.
- Keep a journal and discuss the important elements of the novel.
- Understand the “push-pull” factors of immigration and the various reasons people immigrate.
- Understand how “duality of cultures” and “stages of adaptation” function in the lives of immigrants.
- Illustrate a Haitian proverb with Haitian art techniques.
- Write an essay comparing and contrasting Edwidge Danticat’s immigration experience to those in the novel.

Materials: Selected books; computers with Internet access; [*Haitian Visions: A Diverse Cultural Legacy video*](#) (Tucson, Arizona: CRIZMAC, 1993); art media, artifacts; notebook.

Handouts: (attached)

[Define the Terms Worksheet](#)

[Haitian Visions and Internet Research Response Worksheet](#)

[Stage of Adaptation and Push-Pull Worksheet](#)

[Behind the Mountains Related Websites](#)

[List of Haitian History and Culture Topics](#)

Procedures:

Before Reading:

1. Prepare for reading *Behind the Mountains* by having students brainstorm about why people immigrate and having students interview family members and friends about their family immigration stories. Discuss the reasons people immigrate.
2. As a follow up to the discussion, have students begin researching stories -- on the Internet and in other sources -- of immigration to the U.S.
3. Have students research the following in relation to immigration: Refugee; Stages of Adaptation; Culture Shock; Duality of Cultures or Bicultural; Assimilation; Acculturation. Have students apply their research about these terms to the interviews and stories of immigrants.
4. Have students find an example of a “pull” immigrant (people seeking opportunity) and a “push” immigrant (people forced to leave due to persecution).
5. Have students research the history of Haiti in a cooperative learning jig-saw. Once students have jig-sawed about the different time periods and aspects of Haitian history, have students compile a list of “push-pull” factors during different time periods that might have contributed to Haitian immigration.

While Reading:

1. Read the first entry of the novel (October 18) and discuss Celiane’s “sweet little book.” Have students consider why Celiane decides to use her notebook as a personal journal. Distribute small journals to students. Explain that their journals are to be used to record their reactions to the readings and discussions of *Behind the Mountains*. Ask students to note their reactions, details about characters or settings, themes, symbols, anecdotes and proverbs.
2. After reading the October 19 entry: Ask students why they think Celiane’s father immigrated to the United States and why they think he left his family behind. Why does he send cassettes instead of writing, calling, or visiting?
3. Ask students about Moy’s conflicts in this entry.

4. Ask students what they know about Haitian art. Show students examples of Haitian art. Have students write a list of words describing the art. View the video *Haitian Visions*.

(Dates refer to entries in Celiane's journal)

October 20: Ask the students why Celiane is having difficulty writing to her father. Have students write a letter from Celiane to her father. Have students share what they wrote with a partner and have the partner respond to the letter as Celiane's father.

October 22: Ask the students what they know about the Day of the Dead celebrations in different countries. Show students Day of the Dead artifacts from various countries. Ask students to write a response to the celebration of the Day of the Dead.

October 23: Ask the students to identify the reasons for immigration in the Esperance family.

October 27: Ask the students to discuss Celiane's feelings about the mountains and the city.

October 30: Ask the students to discuss the political situation that Celiane describes.

November 5: Ask the students to record what they think happened to Celiane and to Manman. Have students share what they wrote with a partner and report back to the class.

November 6-25: Ask the students to discuss the violence and the characters' reactions to it. Have the students read "Sawfish Soup" and "We Are Ugly but We Are Here" by Edwidge Danticat. Ask the students to write a reflection on the poem and the incidence of violence in Behind the Mountains. Have students share what they wrote with a partner and report back to the class.

November 26: Ask the students why they think Tante Rose votes and why Moy feels he must go with her. Have students role-play the various points of view about going to the polls on that day -- Tante Rose's view, Moy's view, Manman's view.

December 13-17 (74, 76): Ask the students to explain Celiane's conflict about leaving. What are the "push-pull" factors operating within Celiane? Ask students to draw a description of Celiane's conflict.

December 18: Ask the students why Celiane and Manman have to undergo another medical examination.

December 20: Ask the students what Tante Rose's comments about Celiane's father tells them about his character. Review characterization.

December 21-22: Have the students write a reaction to Celiane's reunion with her father in New York. Ask them to surmise what Moy must be feeling and respond in writing. Have students share what they wrote with a partner and report back to the class.

December 22-December 24: Ask students to draw a diagram contrasting Celiane's feelings out on the streets of New York to her feelings inside the church.

December 26: Ask students to explain the nature of the argument between Manman and Papa in terms of their different stages of adaptation. [Initial Stage, Uprooting, Culture Shock, Assimilation or Acculturation, Integration/Mainstreaming]

January 2: Ask students to respond in writing to Celiane's first day of school in terms of her stage of adaptation.

January 4-17: Ask students break into small groups to discuss how they think Faidherbe and Immacula will make a difference for Celiane. Have the group reporter, report back to the class. As the students report back, ask the class to offer suggestions or examples of helping someone who is new to the school community.

January 18-22: Ask students to elaborate on Celiane's reactions to the speeches of the outgoing and the incoming Presidents and to compare what each President says about immigrants. Have students share what they wrote with a partner and report back to the class.

January 24: Ask students to break into small groups to compare the information given to Celiane by Faidherbe and Immacula on this day to the information that was given to her on her first day of school. Have the group reporter, report back to the class.

January 29: Ask students to respond to what Celiane has learned about Immacula. Ask them to describe the conflict and distance that is developing between Celiane and Moy and their father. Ask them to explain the significance of Granpe's ice story.

January 30: Ask students to draw a Venn Diagram comparing Immacula and Therese.

February 4-15: Ask students to respond to the disagreement between Moy and his father. Have students share what they wrote with a partner and report back to the class.

February 18-19: Ask students to respond to Celiane's letter. Have students share what they wrote with a partner and report back to the class.

February 21-22: Ask students to respond to how the issues are resolved between Moy and his father. Ask them to reflect on their feelings about this resolution.

February 16, February 20, February 23: Ask student how the new developments at Immacula's house have altered things for Immacula. Ask students to reflect on how they would feel in Immacula's situation.

February 25, February 26: Ask students to elaborate on Celiane's response to what she has learned from Therese's letters. Have students write a letter to Therese from Celiane.

March 3: Ask students to elaborate on the significance of Moy's paintings in their new home.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

After Reading: Students will research Haitian Proverbs and Haitian Art. Each student will illustrate a Haitian proverb using Haitian art techniques.

CULMINATING ACTIVITY:

Students will read "My Personal Journey" by Edwidge Danticat (161-166). Students will write an essay comparing and contrasting Edwidge Danticat's immigration experience to those in the novel, and tie these in to the immigration experiences they had learned about through their research and interviews.

ASSESSMENT:

Provide checklists and rubrics to assess the journal responses, the essay, and the proverb illustration. Quizzes or tests may also be given to assess students' knowledge of material in the unit.

Name _____ Date _____

Define the Following Terms:

Refugee

Stages of Adaptation

Culture Shock

Duality of Cultures or Bicultural

Assimilation

Acculturation

"Push-Pull" Factors

Name _____

From your viewing of Haitian Visions and your Internet research, make a list of the characteristics of Haitian art:

Various media used and type of work produced:

Specific characteristics of Haitian Painting:

Colors:

Perspective and style:

Themes and subject matter:

Inspirations:

Name _____ Date _____

Stage of Adaptation	Examples
Initial Stage also called "Honeymoon Stage"	
Uprooting Stage — Reality Check	
Culture Shock	
Adaptation Stage: Assimilation or Acculturation	
Mainstream Stage: Culture Split or Final Acculturation	

Push-Pull Factors	Examples

Behind the Mountains Web Sites

Task	Brainstorm about why people immigrate. Interview family members and friends about their family immigration stories. Discuss the reasons people immigrate.
Interview Forms	http://www.newton.mec.edu/Angier/DimSum/Immigration%20Interview%20sheet
Task	<p>Research stories -- on the Internet and in other sources -- of immigration to the U.S.</p> <p>Research the following in relation to immigration: Refugee; Stages of Adaptation; Culture Shock; Duality of Cultures or Bicultural; Assimilation; Acculturation. Have students apply their research about these terms to the interviews and stories of immigrants.</p> <p>Find an example of a "pull" immigrant (people seeking opportunity) and a "push" immigrant (people forced to leave due to persecution).</p>
Immigration Vocabulary and Terms	<p>Refugee; Stages of Adaptation; Culture Shock; Duality of Cultures or Bicultural; Assimilation; Acculturation; "Push-Pull" Factors.</p> <p>http://www.wordiq.com/ http://www.google.com/ You can search for a word's definition by typing [define:] into the Google search box followed by the word or phrase you're looking up. http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/ http://www.jaha.org/edu/discovery_center/push-pull/peopling_pa01.html http://www.prb.org/Content/NavigationMenu/PRB/Educators/Human_Population/Migration2/Migration1.htm http://members.aol.com/lacillo/immigrant.html http://www.njpep.org/tutorials/ell_mainstream/part_two/adaptation.html</p>
Immigrant Interviews	<p>http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/immig/interv/toc.php http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/97/oh1/ammem.html http://www.hsp.org/default.aspx?id=74 http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/ http://www.otan.us/webfarm/emailproject/grace.htm http://www.seattleschools.org/schools/hamilton/projects/immigration/ http://library.thinkquest.org/20619/Past.html http://www.connhistory.org/promisedland_guide.htm#Materials</p>

Research Task	Research the history of Haiti in a cooperative learning jig-saw. Jig-saw about the different time periods and aspects of Haitian history. Compile a list of “push-pull” factors during different time periods that might have contributed to Haitian immigration
Haiti	Map http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/caribbean.html Geography http://www.theodora.com/wfb/haiti_geography.html http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ha.html http://www.memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/httoc.html http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/H/Haiti.asp
History of Haiti	http://www.afsc.org/latinamerica/int/timeline.htm http://www.travelinghaiti.com/history.asp http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/history/precolumbian/tainover.htm http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/misctopic/leftover/histchron.htm http://www.antislavery.org/breakingthesilence/slave_routes/slave_routes_dominicanrepublic.shtml http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/httoc.html http://countrystudies.us/haiti/ http://www.culturalorientation.net/haiti/htoc.html http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43a/index.html http://www.nrwcs.org/haiti/scavenger_hunt.htm
Haitian Culture	http://www.ahadonline.org/eLibrary/creoleconnection/Number20/haitiancreole.htm Language http://countrystudies.us/haiti/33.htm Religion http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/domrep/domrep0402-02.htm Haiti and The Dominican Republic http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/misctopic/dominican/conception.htm Haiti and The Dominican Republic http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/haiti/arts.html Music, Literature and Art http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-217445 Music, Literature and Art http://countrystudies.us/haiti/44.htm Economy http://www.usatoday.com/money/world/2004-02-26-haitiecon_x.htm Economy http://www.everythinghaitian.com/haitian_cuisine.asp Cuisine http://www.kreyol.com/recipes.html Food http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/haiti/sports.html Sports and Recreation
Task	What do you know about Haitian art? Look at examples of Haitian art. Write a list of words describing the art. View the video Haitian Visions .
Haitian Art	http://www.medalia.net/ http://faculty.goucher.edu/mbell/painting.htm http://www.discoverhaiti.com/artsynop.htm http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/art/art.htm http://www.haitianart.com/

	<p> http://www.haitian-art-co.com/place.html http://dmoz.org/Regional/Caribbean/Haiti/Arts_and_Entertainment/ http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/diversit.htm#Haiti http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/haiti.htm http://www.indigoarts.com/gallery_j.mesidor2.html http://www.indigoarts.com/gallery_haiti_main.html http://www.barristersgallery.com/haitian.html http://www.haitian-art-co.com/ http://www.egallery.com/coll/haitian.php http://www.galleryofwestindianart.com/haitianthumbnails.htm http://www.haitianart.com/cgi-bin/cp-app.cgi?usr=50X9045115&rnd=3457564&rrc=N&cip=68.80.198.65&pg=ste_search_results&startrow=0&searchstr=Paintings%20-%20Mystic&searchrpp=21&ref=&cat= http://www.arthaiti.com/ http://www.haitianpaintings.com/hp.asp http://www.artmediahaiti.com/ http://www.friendsofhas.org/forsale/haitian_art_paintings.php3 http://www.emediawire.com/prfiles/2005/08/07/270280/Art.JPG </p> <p>Artistic Traditions http://www.friendsofhas.org/art/haitian_main.php3 </p> <p>Veve Inspired http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/5319/veves.htm </p> <p>VeVe http://altreligion.about.com/library/glossary/symbols/bldefsveve.htm http://altreligion.about.com/library/graphics/bl_veves.htm http://altreligion.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http://www.frateralastor.com/veve.htm </p> <p>Lesson http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml/workshop4/authors2b.html </p>
<p>Research Task</p>	<p>What do you know about the Day of the Dead celebrations in different countries. Explore Day of the Dead customs and photographs from various countries. Write a response to the celebration of the Day of the Dead.</p>
<p>Day of the Dead</p>	<p> Mexico http://www.mexconnect.com/mex_/feature/daydeadindex.html http://www.dayofthedead.com/ http://www.azcentral.com/ent/dead/ http://www.mexonline.com/dayofthedead.htm http://www.peoplesguide.com/1pages/chapts/viva/dodead/bobbi/dodbobi.html </p>

	<p>Guatemala http://www.internationalliving.com/guatemala/free/10-14-2004.html http://www.fodors.com/miniguides/mqresults.cfm?destination=antigua_western@236&cur_section=fea&feature=30002 http://www.pbase.com/magpiejst/diana_day_of_the_dead</p> <p>Haiti http://ilarioba.tripod.com/media/apvodou11-1-03.htm</p> <p>Ecuador http://www.thebestofecuador.com/festivals.htm#day http://www.andeanimages.com/galleries/ecuador/ecuador_festivals_religion/source/11.html http://ecuador42.tripod.com/page4.htm</p> <p>Peru http://www.deepeco.net/gallery/gallery-1.htm</p> <p>Day of the Dead Doll http://www.folkart.com/catalog/day_of_the_dead_doll_4020931.htm</p> <p>Skulls http://www.multiculturalarts.com/NewFiles/skull.html</p>
<p>Task</p>	<p>Discuss the violence in the novel and the characters' reactions to it. Read "Sawfish Soup" and "We Are Ugly, But We Are Here" by Edwidge Danticat.</p> <p>Write a reflection on the poem and the incidence of violence in <u>Behind the Mountains</u>.</p> <p>Share what you wrote with a partner and report back to the class.</p>
<p>By Edwidge Danticat</p>	<p>"Sawfish Soup" by Edwidge Danticat (1991) http://rps.uvi.edu/CaribbeanWriter/volume5/sawfishsoup.html</p> <p>"We Are Ugly, But We Are Here" by Edwidge Danticat http://rps.uvi.edu/CaribbeanWriter/volume10/v10p137.html</p>

Culminating Task	Research Haitian Proverbs and Haitian Art. Illustrate a Haitian proverb using Haitian art techniques. (See Haitian Art Above)
Haitian Proverbs	http://www.culturalorientation.net/haiti/hprov.html http://haitianproverbs.com/ http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/43a/008.html Proverbs and art http://www.figgeartmuseum.org/SiteDefault.aspx?nt=16&PageID=134
Behind the Mountains Vocabulary	calabash: 3 sisal mat: 4 dous: 13 tap tap 26 camion: 37 kremas 71 fanal: 71 Tonton Nwel (Father Christmas) 71 Papa Fwet: 72 Gourde: 80 Tenth Department: 86 Disapora: 86 Jwaye Nowel: 95 soup_joumou, squash soup 98
Resources for Teachers	http://www.educavision.com/about.html Haitian/Haitian American Curriculum Teacher/Student Resources K-12 Department of Multicultural Education Multicultural Studies Curriculum Haitian Resource Section Compiled and Edited by: Charlemagne Baptiste and Bito David www.palmbeach.k12.fl.us/Multicultural/curriculum/Haiti/HaitianStudiesResources.pdf Behind the Mountains Lesson Plan www.lindakreft.com/Americas/pdf/voices_behind.pdf

HAITIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE TOPICS

- THE LAND NOW CALLED HAITI PRECOLOMBIAN-1492
- THE LAND NOW CALLED HAITI 1493-1697
- THE LAND NOW CALLED HAITI 1697-1791
- HAITI 1791-1803
- HAITI 1803-1843
- HAITI 1843-1915
- HAITI 1915-1934
- HAITI 1934-1957
- HAITI 1957-1971
- HAITI 1971-1986
- HAITI 1986-1990
- HAITI 1991-1994
- HAITI 1995-1999
- HAITI 2000-2005
- Genocide and Slavery in Haiti
- Race and ethnicity: Relations between Haiti and the Dominican Republic
- The economy of Haiti
- Religion in Haiti
- Language: What is Haitian Creole?
- Food and recreation in Haiti
- Music, Literature and the Arts of Haiti