



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

## **Immigrants & Community**

**Grade Level:** Middle School (6th-8th grades)

**Goal:** To teach middle school students about various types of community and about how immigrants contribute to the communities of which they are a part. Through literacy-based activities, students will increase their knowledge of the countries of origin of some immigrants to the United States, of reasons for immigration, and of some ways immigrants adjust to life in the United States.

**Objectives:** Students will develop their skills in discussion, in reading, and in responding to literature. Specifically, students will:

- Discuss the concept of community to include specific communities like neighborhoods, schools and institutions.
- Read the novel [\*Seedfolks\*](#), by Paul Fleishman
- Keep a journal on important elements of the novel.
- Create a map of the community garden portrayed in the novel.
- Research the countries of origin of various characters in the novel and learn about reasons for immigration.
- Participate in a culminating activity

**Materials:** selected books; pictures of a community garden; computer with access to the Internet; art media (e.g. markers, construction paper, paint); sight for a garden and garden supplies including seeds and/or seedlings or vegetables and other foodstuff.

**Procedure:**

1. Introduce the concept of community by discussing ways people form groups around common interests. Discuss different types of communities (e.g. neighborhoods, schools, social clubs, religious groups and institutions, social action groups). Identify the common interests around which these communities form (e.g. Neighborhoods are communities with specified physical borders. Schools are communities where adults and children share the common interest of learning.). Share examples of local immigrant communities. Discuss reasons why immigrants might form communities in their new countries.

2. Share pictures of a community garden. Discuss the common interest or interests of people who participate in this type of communal activity. Share pictures of community gardens and farmers markets.
3. Read the book [\*Seedfolks\*](#) by Paul Fleischman. The book may be read aloud to reinforce the oral storytelling style of the novel. Reading a few chapters at a time will allow the opportunity for discussion and other activities. Teachers can develop questions to encourage discussion of the characters, setting, and themes in the novel. Since many of the characters in the novel are immigrants, the teacher may focus on how the garden helped characters adjust to life in their new community.
4. As students read the novel, they can keep a journal in which they note the vegetables that are planted and the characters' motivations for joining the garden. Students might also write about how each character benefits from the garden and how they, in turn, give to the garden community. When students finish the novel, have them plot a map of the garden to include: where each character lives in relation to the garden, where and what each character planted, where and what other characters mentioned in the novel planted, and any other relevant details.
5. Using the Internet and other resources, have students research different characters' countries of origin. (Note that not all characters in the novel are immigrants.) Discuss different reasons for immigration (e.g. for jobs, to join family, to find refuge from war or persecution). Discuss reasons characters in the novel may have immigrated. Next, discuss how characters in the novel have adjusted to life in the United States. Point out both positive and negative adjustments. Finally, have students develop profiles of the characters that include information about countries of origin, possible reasons for immigration, and adjustment to life in the United States.
6. As a culminating project, students might try starting a small school garden, planting some of the plants mentioned in the novel. If weather and/or space does not permit a large-scale garden project, students may plan a "harvest" party in which they bring in vegetables mentioned in the novel. Students might also visit a community garden or fresh produce market (a Farmers' Market).

**Assessment:** For each student compile a portfolio to include: journal entries, garden map, and character profiles. Quizzes or tests may also be given to assess students' knowledge of material in the unit.