Honors World Literature / Mrs. Pariser

GHS College Prep Magnet

**A****merica’s Diverse Voices**:

A Study of the Immigrant Experience in Our United States

“…Give me your tired, your poor,

your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

the wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"[[1]](#footnote-1)

~Lady Liberty

“Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America.

Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history.”

~Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*

**UNIT OVERVIEW**

All semester so far, we’ve been looking at ideas about success that characterize this country for so many people, both for those living inside and outside of our borders. As we’ve already established, the United States prides itself on being a country where— with hard work, determination, and a little pluck— anything is possible. It is because of this ideal, this “American Dream,” that many people come from all over the world to make a new home for themselves in this country.

Over the course of this final unit, we will strive to understand what it means when it is said that America is a nation of immigrants. We will turn our attention to immigrant voices—in particular, those that are often overlooked and/or underrepresented in our country’s mainstream history—to better understand the experiences of those who come to our country in search of a new life for themselves and their families. Without looking at these stories and histories, we have not yet considered what it truly means to be American. Our study will be guided by the following essential questions:

* *What does it mean to be an American?*
* *How do (and how should) societies integrate newcomers? How do newcomers develop a sense of belonging to the places where they have arrived?*
* *What is it like to be an immigrant in the United States? Specifically, what social, political, cultural, and economic factors shape the experiences of different immigrant groups? What are the common themes of the American immigrant experience?*

**UNIT STRUCTURE & ASSESSMENTS**

This unit will be structured differently than those we have worked through this year so far. Much of the time we spend together in class will be grounded in small group and individual work. This will require you to manage your schedule and workload largely with your peers and on your own, and necessitate that you really step up and take responsibility for how you spend your time. This is meant to prepare you for the kind of work and learning environment that you will encounter in college. So don’t let seniorities get the best of you; this will not set you up for success in our remaining eleven weeks together.

We will begin the unit with some shorter texts (essays, short stories, poems, etc.) and do some important skill building together. This will set you up to complete your full-length reading assignments more independently.

Over the next eleven weeks, you will be working on a **final research paper** and a study in small **literature circle groups** of a **memoir or fictionalized narrative of a particular immigrant experience.** The work you do in these literature circles and on your individual research paper will have components that are connected to one another, and you will work on both concurrently for the remainder of the semester. Specific details about both components of this unit will be provided over the next few weeks.

In sum, the primary assessments that you will be responsible for this semester include (but are not limited to) the following:

* ***A literature circle study of a memoir or novel****, which will include:*
  + *Reading and notes* (you will each have a particular role within your group, and will be held accountable to fulfilling that role).
  + *A literature circle presentation.*
* ***An Individual Research Project***
  + *Research components* will include the development of an individual research question, a series of research notecards to record what you find in your effort to answer that research question, and the development of an analytical thesis that offers a position on your findings, in addition to other smaller steps to aid you in all of this along the way.
  + *Final paper* (this will aim to summarize your research, present your conclusion about that research, and make analytical connections to your literature circle reading).

You will be guided through each component of these tasks. The goal is that by the conclusion of the semester, you will be highly proficient in the skills that are required to complete any advanced research and college-level inquiry based project or paper. You will have no final exam for this course except the completion of these final assignments. A failure to complete the assignments listed above will hinder your ability to pass this class, and thus, your ability to walk on stage in June. Please consider your academic choices for the remaining weeks of school with this in mind.

1. This is from "The New Colossus," a sonnet that American poet Emma Lazarus (1849–1887) wrote in 1883 to raise money for the construction of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. In 1903, the poem was engraved on a bronze plaque and mounted inside the pedestal's lower level. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)