

5. Lesia's Dream

This activity examines the struggles of past generations in shaping the present – and creating opportunity for the future.



Materials Needed:

Book "*Lesia's Dream*" by Laura Langston

Video "*Homes of Hope*" (DVD player)

Thematic Poster

BLM 6-2

Teachers should preview all video content before screening it for students. Lengths are approximate running times. Before use, consider classroom and community sensitivities, and age-appropriateness.

Homes of Hope

This documentary takes place in Tijuana, Mexico. Hannah, along with her family and friends traveled to the slums of Tijuana to build a house for a homeless single mother and her two children. Students are introduced to the struggles of a different kind of poverty in a foreign country, and grow attached to Leslie, Ricardo and Christie as they watch their home rise from the hearts and efforts of a group of caring people.

Length: 17:30 minutes

Read aloud "*Lesia's Dream*" by Laura Langston.

This is an excellent "read aloud" to introduce students to the idea the struggles of past generations in shaping Canada. Afterward, discuss how the "shape of the present" is a platform for the future.

Through discussions, written reflections and research activities, students will gain awareness of the hardships and inequities faced by Canada's early immigrants. It will provide them with the opportunity to gain respect for the benefits of living in Canada and recognize the struggles of immigrants as they strive to become part of this great country.

Summary:

In the spring of 1914, 15-year-old Lesia and her older brother, Ivan, convince their parents to emigrate from Ukraine (at that time part of Austria) to Manitoba, Canada. There, the family pays \$10 for 160 acres of scrub woodland which they struggle to tame into rich farmland. The family dream is nearly shattered when Ivan and his father are interned as "enemy aliens" because Canada has gone to war with Austria.

With the help of sympathetic neighbours, Lesia manages to clear the necessary 10 acres and help her mother to give birth to her new little brother. She also sells eggs, butter and woven belts to avoid her father's fierce determination not to borrow money. Although one new neighbour, vain and spoiled Minnie, is vicious to Lesia and strangers often reject the "bohunks" out of hand, other Ukrainian farmers are more than generous. Gradually, Lesia falls in love with Andrew Korol, who, at 20, is already a widower. Although, to survive, Lesia must pawn her hand-carved family treasure box and the family Bible, Andrew redeems them for her.

Consider and discuss:

- How would you react if you were treated with similar discriminatory attitudes today?
- What were the struggles and benefits of immigration for Lesia's family? In your opinion, which outweighs the other? Why?
- Have we really learned from the past or are we still treating new immigrants the same way that Lesia's family was treated?
- The way in which Lesia's family is treated and referred to is not necessarily typical for a children's book. However, given that it is based on truth, the author chose to include these powerful images. How would the story and its impact be different had the author chosen to change or omit these parts of the story?
- Which other cultural groups were discriminated against during periods of Canada's history? Research through books, articles, interviews and the Internet.

Do you see similarities between Lesia's life and challenges when she first came to Canada, and the life and challenges that the boy in the poster faces in his life today?

If the boy in the poster were to come to Canada, what would his life be like here? Would he face discrimination? Would he have more rights than he has in his own country? Would his life be better?

If he cannot come to a country like Canada, how could his life be made better?

Lesia worked hard herself and had help. Could the child in the poster use some help? Who should help him?

Use **BLM 6-2**. Compare and contrast the treatment of immigrants today with those of the past by using a Venn diagram.

BLM 6-2 Lesia's Dream

Immigrants of the Past

Immigrants of Today

