"The New Americans" PBS Documentary

I have not been able to find this mini-series online for free. You can purchase the DVD here for $39.95. Please let Tara know if you find this available for free and I will update.

<http://www.kartemquin.com/store/product/KTQ0033>

Description of mini-series: *The New Americans* follows four years in the lives of a diverse group of contemporary immigrants and refugees as they journey to start new lives in America. We follow an Indian couple to Silicon Valley through the dot-com boom and bust. A Mexican meatpacker struggles to reunite his family in rural Kansas. Two families of Nigerian refugees (including the sister of slain Ogoni activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa) escape government persecution. Two Los Angeles Dodgers prospects follow their big dreams of escaping the barrios of the Dominican Republic. A Palestinian woman who marries into a new life in Chicago only to discover in the wake of September 11, she cannot leave behind the pain of her homeland's conflict. Kartemquin assembled a team of talented directors including the creators of Hoop Dreams, Who Killed Vincent Chin, and Vietnam, Long Time Coming. The detailed portraits that resulted were woven into a seven-hour miniseries that presents a kaleidoscopic picture of immigrant life and a first impression of the U.S. that few born in America can imagine.

The full activity guide from PBS is here: <https://www-tc.pbs.org/independentlens/newamericans/pdfs/new_americans_series_guide.pdf> . I pulled out a few pieces that I thought were uniquely valuable.

This is a three episode series - each episode is two hours in length.

***Class Discussion prior to watching the video:***

Have students discuss the title of the mini-series. What makes someone American? What’s the difference between coming to America and becoming American?

Explain that the video explores the journeys of several immigrant and refugee families and tell where they are from (Mexico, Palestine, India, the Dominican Republic and Nigeria). Ask the students the following question: "What issues do you think these immigrants and refugees will face as they make a life in the United States?" Document this brainstormed list (i.e. posted butcher paper) to see how well the participants predicted the issues in the program.

***As students are viewing:***As students watch the episodes, have them fill out the story chart at the bottom of this lesson plan.

***Reflection/Free Write after each episode:***

After showing each episode, I am going to give the students a half-sheet of paper to just free-write about the episode they watched. Have them jot down their feelings and reactions to what they saw.

***Post Series Reflection***: Assign the students a multi-paragraph reflection piece in which they include examples from the series, knowledge they have gained from the class, and personal thoughts. They should choose **one** of these quotes from the movie as the foundation of their essay. Each quote focuses on a central theme found in the series:

(1) Hopes/Dreams - Jihad’s Friend 1: “*The United States, that is what's best for me.... What I want as a human being I can't achieve in Palestine. I want a good life, good education and good work and to find my dignity through work.”*

(2) Frustration - Anjan: “*“I'm sad that now I'm lost in this world, that I wasn't wise enough when I got lost to find my way, so I didn't have to put others to sorrow. Itís like I'm in South Pole and I have just a compass, and I don't know how the compass works... . So many visions about life have changed. Very few things remain black and white.”*

(3) Need for Community - Ricardo: “*Racism exists not only because I’m white or you’re black, but because you’re Latino, you’re of another culture*.”

(4) Immigrants at Work and School - Pedro: “*In the course of eight hours, you have to cut up 3,800 cows into many parts. If I don’t keep up with my pieces, it’s hard on fellow workers. In that plant there are people from all over the world because I don’t think Americans would want to get their hands dirty with that kind of work. There are people from Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Asia. If it weren’t for us, I think the plant would not exist*.”

(5) Money and Success - Ricardo: “*Everything depends on two things, dedication and luck—-mainly luck*.”

**STORY CHART: THE NEW AMERICANS**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Story Line | Why they came | What they expect to find | Challenges they face | Support systems/ opportunities | Choices made |
| Nigeria: Israel and Ngozi |  |  |  |  |  |
| Nigeria: Barine, Zina, and Nini |  |  |  |  |  |
| Dominican Republic: Ricardo, Jose, Ramon |  |  |  |  |  |
| Palestine: Naima, Hatem  Mexico: Pedro, Ventura, Nora, Pedrito |  |  |  |  |  |
| India: Anjan, Harshini |  |  |  |  |  |