



Obstacles and Contributions
Teacher's Resource Packet

For use in conjunction with the Obstacles and Contributions program at the Public Museum of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and State of Michigan curriculum standards.

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The *Obstacles and Contributions* tour focuses on some of the people who made journeys from different places in the world and came to Grand Rapids. Different groups of newcomers experienced many of the same trials and triumphs. We will be discovering:

- The variety of reasons people came to Grand Rapids.
- The many difficulties they faced on their way and when they arrived.
- The many contributions newcomers made once they became part of the community.

This comprehensive teacher's packet contains several resources the teacher can use to enhance classroom learning of the overall immigration or ethnic history themes. It is also designed to complement the Public Museum's guided tour for this grade level.

Pre-Visit Materials

- Michigan Department of Education Curriculum Links
- *Newcomer's* Exhibit Description
- Vocabulary List
- "Obstacles and Contributions" Book List
- *Timeline* Individual or Group Activity
- *Grand Rapids Promotion* Group Activity
- Class Discussion Topics
- Highlighted Personal Stories from the Exhibit

Post-Visit Materials

- *Family History* Individual Activity
- *A Personal Story* Individual Activity

These materials cannot be reproduced for use beyond the classroom without the written consent of the Public Museum of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Curriculum Links

The *Obstacles and Contributions* program is designed to fit with the Curriculum standards of the Kent County Collaborative Core Curriculum (KC4) and the State of Michigan. The specific links covered are listed below.

History

- **3 – H3.0.8** Use case studies or stories to describe how the ideas or actions of individuals affected the history of Michigan.
- **4 – H3.0.2** Use primary and secondary sources to explain how migration and immigration affected and continue to affect the growth of Michigan. (G)
- **4 – H3.0.4** Draw upon stories, photos, artifacts, and other primary sources to compare the life of people in towns and cities in Michigan and in the Great

Lakes region during a variety of time periods from 1837 to the present (e.g., 1837-1900, 1900-1950, 1950-2000). (G)

Geography

- **3 – G4.0.2** Describe diverse groups that have come into a region of Michigan and reasons why they came (push/pull factors). (H)
- **4 – G4.0.1** Use a case study or story about migration within or to the United States to identify push and pull factors (why they left, why they came) that influenced the migration. (H)
- **4 – G4.0.2** Describe the impact of immigration to the United States on the cultural development of different places or regions of the United States (e.g., forms of shelter, language, food). (H)

Civics

- **3 – C1.0.1** Give an example of how Michigan state government fulfills one of the purposes of government (e.g., protecting individual rights, promoting the common good, ensuring equal treatment under the law).
- **3 – C5.0.1** Identify rights (e.g., freedom of speech, freedom of religion, right to own property) and responsibilities of citizenship (e.g., respecting the rights of others, voting, obeying laws).
- **4 – C5.0.2** Describe the relationship between rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- **4 – C5.0.4** Describe ways citizens can work together to promote the values and principles of American democracy.

Public Discourse, Decision Making, and Citizen Involvement

- **3 – P3.1.1 & 4 – P3.1.1** Identify public issues in Michigan that influence the daily lives of its citizens.
- **5 – P3.1.1** Identify contemporary public issues related to the United States Constitution and their related factual, definitional, and ethical questions.

Language Arts

- **R.IT.03.02 & R.IT.05.02** identify informational text patterns including descriptive, sequential, enumerative, compare/contrast, and problem/solution.
- **R.CM.03.01, R.CM.04.01 & R.CM.05.01** connect personal knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the world to themes and perspectives in text through oral and written responses.
- **W.GN.03.04 & W.GN.04.04 & W.GN.05.04** use the writing process to produce and present a research project; initiate research questions from content area text from a teacher-selected topic; and use a variety of resources to gather and organize information.
- **R.CM.04.03** explain relationships among themes, ideas, and characters within and across texts to create a deeper understanding by categorizing and classifying, comparing and contrasting, or drawing parallels across time and culture.

Newcomers Exhibit Description

The Newcomers exhibit educates students about the personal journeys, struggles and accomplishments of the immigrants who have settled in West Michigan throughout its history. Artifacts and personal narratives help to bring the exhibit to life for students.

The exhibit is organized thematically around universal human experiences. These themes serve as the framework for the stories of representative individuals from different ethnic groups and racial backgrounds.

- The “**Introduction**” launches the major themes of the exhibit. It explains that ethnicity is subject to constant change and gives an overview of the various groups and ethnicities that have made their homes in West Michigan over time.
- “**Leaving Home**” explains the push and pull factors which lead people to leave home and experience an often-difficult journey towards a new place. It also captures the difficult decisions people must make about what they can bring with them and what they must leave behind.
- “**Coming to This Place**” illustrates why people choose to come to Grand Rapids and what happens after they first arrive in West Michigan.
- “**Settling In**” depicts how each group adjusts to its new environment and impacts the community it has joined.
- “**Making a Living**” focuses on the importance of work. It explores employment options available to different groups once they settle in Grand Rapids.
- “**Building a Family**” emphasizes how family is usually the most important purveyor of ethnic traditions in the U.S. It shows the tension many families face between holding on to traditions and losing language and customs after years or decades away from their homeland.
- “**Creating Community**” demonstrates how newcomers, when first arriving in a new place, often seek out people who speak the same language, practice the same religion and hold to the same customs. This section illustrates how different groups recreate institutions that strengthen the ties between members and help create a shared identity.
- “**Realizing Identity**” investigates how all people are influenced and ultimately changed by where they live. This section explores the ideas that a diverse and ever-changing community influences those who live within it.
- “**A New Place**” summarizes the complex and dynamic exchanges that occur when groups of people are negotiating and re-negotiating community and

identity. All the people shown in this exhibit went through universal experiences that ultimately helped them create the particular community and traditions of *this* place—Grand Rapids.

Newcomers: Obstacles and Contributions Vocabulary

Word	Meaning
1. community	A group of people with a common characteristic of interest living together within a larger community. This could be a city, neighborhood, school district, etc.
2. culture	The customary beliefs, social forms and physical traits of an ethnic, religious or social group.
3. custom	A practice followed by a people of a particular group or region.
4. discrimination	Unfair treatment of a person or group on the basis of prejudice.
5. diverse	Made up of many different distinct characteristics, qualities or elements.
6. diversity	The presence in one population of a wide variety of cultures, opinions, ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.
7. heritage	Something that is passed down from preceding generations; a tradition.
8 immigration	To enter and settle in a country or region to which one is not native.
9. migration	The movement of a person or a group of people from one place to another.
10 nationality	The status of belonging to a particular nation by origin, birth or naturalization.

Obstacles and Contributions Book List

These are some recommended books for you to use to help supplement your classroom instruction as you prepare for your field trip.

Author	Title	Publisher
Tarbescu, Edith	<i>Annushka's Voyage</i> <i>Dreams of the Golden Country:</i> <i>The Diary of Zipporah Feldman,</i> <i>a Jewish Immigrant Girl</i>	Clarion Books
Lasky, Kathryn		Scholastic
GR Historical Commission	<i>From Saigon to Sanctuary: The Story of Vietnamese Refugees in Grand Rapids</i>	GR Historical Commission
Bierman, Carol	<i>Journey to Ellis Island</i>	Hyperion
Levitin, Sonia	<i>Silver Days</i>	Aladdin Paperbacks
Hesse, Karen	<i>Letters from Rifka</i>	Henry Holt and Co. Lothrop, Lee & Shephard Books
Cohen, Barbara	<i>Molly's Pilgrim</i>	Books
Levitin, Sonia	<i>Journey to America</i>	Aladdin Paperbacks

Timeline

- **Objective:** Students will explore other historical context surrounding the time when many of the newcomers came to Grand Rapids.
- **Materials:** various art supplies.

Procedure

1. As a class, brainstorm different important events in Grand Rapids history. (Ex. Louis Campau settling, the Furniture Strike of 1911, etc.)
2. Generate a class timeline and post it in the class.
3. Divide students into groups and have them complete the following:
 - Choose one of the events from the timeline (these could also be assigned)
 - Research the assigned event in Grand Rapids history.
 - Create a poster illustrating the event
 - Plan a brief oral report about the event.
4. Student groups should present their event to the class.

Grand Rapids Promotion

- **Objective:** Students will understand more about their city and why newcomers would choose to live in Grand Rapids.
- **Materials:** Research materials and various art supplies.

Procedure

1. Hold a discussion about all the attraction Grand Rapids has that would make people visit and possibly want to move here. (Examples include Festivals, John Ball Zoo, Frederick Meijer Gardens, Museums, proximity to Lake Michigan, etc.)
2. Working individually or in groups, have students choose a feature to promote to the rest of the class.
3. Have the students research their attraction and brainstorm ways to advertise for it.
4. Students should write an advertisement, radio spot or other media presentation encouraging people to move to Grand Rapids.
5. Students should present their project to the rest of the class.

Class Discussion

- **Objective:** Students will think critically about issues relating to the Newcomer's exhibit before their visit to the Museum.
- **Materials:** None.

Possible Discussion Topics

1. Hold a class discussion to determine the reasons why people might leave their homes to go to a new place. Answers might include Civil war, divorce, new employment, to be closer to family or for the adventure.
2. Discuss with students the different goods and services found in the community. Create a T-Chart using this information. Include the occupations of students' family members.
3. Discuss the traditions students in your class celebrate with their families. Generate a list for the class. Students could also draw a picture of their celebration.

Highlighted Stories

These stories can be used for reading aloud in class prior to the museum visit.

Anna Maskevics

Anna Maskevics' journey to Grand Rapids took over eighteen years. She was born in Latvia. When war destroyed her homeland, she fled with her young son. Anna headed to Germany because she knew her husband was fighting for the German army. When she finally found him, the Russian army had taken over Latvia and the Maskevics didn't want to return under those conditions.

The Maskevics family wanted to come to the United States but because of her husband's illness, they were forced to stay in a German refugee camp for eighteen year. Anna earned money for the family by making garments from old uniforms and scraps.

When they were finally allowed to immigrate to the United States, they flew to New York. Their next step was uncertain until Trinity Lutheran Church and a Latvian family in Grand Rapids agreed to sponsor them. With this welcome support, their journey was over and Grand Rapids became home.

John Ball

John Ball came to Grand Rapids in 1836 looking for trees to cut lumber. He liked what he saw and decided to stay. He brought other settlers to Grand Rapids. He organized the public school system and started what is now the Public Museum of Grand Rapids. John Ball Park is his gift to the people of Grand Rapids.

John Ball's journey began in New York, starting with the newly-completed Erie Canal which brought him from Albany to Buffalo. There, he boarded a boat that took him across Lake Erie to Detroit where he bought a horse and other supplies needed for his travel. Among the things he brought with them were a saddlebag and hand forged frying pan.

Here is what he had to say about the things he brought with him. "I brought a horse and saddle and saddlebags, and transferred to the latter from my trunk things most necessary, but omitted to take along a brace of pistols I had purchased in Troy to please my friends, they thinking that I was going into not only a wild but a wicked country."

If you were John Ball, what would you have brought?

Valeria Lipczynski

Valeria Lipczynski was a 20-year old bride when, in 1869, she discovered the value of chain migrations. To escape the German occupation of her homeland, she and her husband, who had participated in a failed insurrection, decided to leave Tremessen, Poland. They journeyed to Grand Rapids because her husband's sister had settled here four years earlier.

In Grand Rapids, Valeria found the freedom to speak Polish and to teach Polish history to the children. She also found like-minded people who could explain the American system to her. She and her husband, John, were the first Polish family to settle east of the Grand River in the neighborhood that they called the "Cegielnia." (Brickyard) This area, south of Michigan Street between Grand and Fuller Avenues, was the location of large brick kilns. About 1874 John, a potter by trade, went into business with Samuel Davis. By 1875 John had become the sole owner of the business that made flower pots, vases and household utensils.

These benefits were too valuable to ignore, so soon after her arrival, Valeria launched some chain migrations of her own. With her husband's help, she sponsored the immigration to Grand Rapids of more than forty families from Tremessen. For these and other Polish newcomers, she also helped arrange jobs and housing. It was said that if Valeria Lipczynski recommended an immigrant for work, no furniture company would refuse him.

The Polish community in Grand Rapids thrived under Valeria's leadership. For her dedication and efforts, she became affectionately known as Queen of the Poles.

Family History Interview

- **Objective:** Students will be able to delve into their own family history.
- **Materials:** None.

Procedure

1. Ask students to interview a family member or family friend about their family history.

2. Suggested Questions for the interview:
 - Who was the first member of our family to move to America? Grand Rapids?
 - When did they come?
 - Why did they come here?
 - How old was this person at the time?
 - How did they travel here?
 - Where did they settle?
 - What stories do we know about them?
 - Did they face any obstacles when they first arrived?
3. Students should write a 1-2 page essay telling the story of when their ancestors were newcomers.

Extensions

- Students can share their stories with the rest of the class.
- Invite family members/friends of class members to come in and tell their story.

A Personal Story

- **Objective:** Students will be able to share part of their history with others.
- **Materials:** Various art supplies.

Procedure

1. Using the students' knowledge of their family history, ask them to design a museum exhibit to share their family's experiences.
2. Their project should answer the following questions:
 - What would it look like?
 - What artifacts would you select to share?
 - What was their journey like?
 - What were the obstacles faced and how were they overcome?
 - What celebrations and traditions do you have?