

# The Melting Pot Myth

## Summary

This lesson plan is designed to expose students to the experiences of minorities in Utah. Students will not only read accounts of minorities in Utah but will also conduct interviews and gain a first hand experience of what it is like to be a minority living in Utah. Students will use this information to analyze, challenge, and rethink the metaphor of U.S. culture as a "melting pot."

## Time Frame

5 class periods of 90 minutes each

## Group Size

Small Groups

## Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Character, Social & Civic Responsibility

## Materials

- [Missing Stories](#)  
Tape Recorder/Tapes  
Interview Outline
- [Picture of the Statue of Liberty](#)
- [Copy of text on Statue of Liberty](#)  
Poster Paper

## Background for Teachers

Teachers should have an understanding of the metaphor of "the melting pot" and how it has been used as a way to describe how minorities are integrated into U.S. culture. Teachers should be aware of how this metaphor no longer accurately or fairly depicts U.S. culture. One alternative way U.S. of thinking about U.S. culture is through the metaphor of a "salad bowl," which replaces the melting pot method of assimilation. Teachers should also know how to conduct an interview and use recording equipment (a number of resources are provided as attachments--each of these can be modified based on the needs of the class and the details of the assignment).

## Student Prior Knowledge

Students should be aware that there are a number of minority groups living in Utah. Students should also know that U.S. culture is often described as a "melting pot."

## Intended Learning Outcomes

- Students will become more aware of minority experiences in Utah.
- Students will learn how to conduct an interview, take notes while conducting an interview, and analyze an interview
- Students will learn about immigration laws in the United States
- Students will learn how the "melting pot" metaphor has been taught in US History and how this concept is no longer representative of U.S. culture

## Instructional Procedures

### Day One

Divide the book Missing Stories into eight sections (one section for each minority group represented in the book--Ute, African-American, Jewish, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Greek and Chicano-Hispanic). Divide the class into eight equal sections (one group for each minority group). Each group will choose one story from their minority section of the text (the reading can be chosen for them by the teacher). Each student in the group will read the story and then get back together as a group and discuss the following:

- Main Theme
- Prejudices
- Racial Issues
- Struggles faced
- Successes
- Personal opinion of the story

As the group discusses the story, one student in the group should be responsible for taking notes. Once the group has finished taking notes and discussing the reading, the students should organize their thoughts into simple sentences, one sentence for each discussion topic from the story. When the students have completed their discussion and have recorded notes, they should transfer their notes onto a poster that they can present to the class. This poster should contain the main talking points the group addressed in their discussion. The poster should be used a way for the groups to share information with the class.

- Main Theme
- Prejudice
- Racial Issues
- Struggles
- Successes

Each group will then present their poster to the class. Collect the posters from each group as they will use these during the next class period. Groups should turn in their poster as well as the notes from their discussion.

### Day Two

Return the posters to each group. Have the students cut their poster paper so that each concept/topic is now one single section of paper. The class will now merge all of their findings onto one piece of poster board with a subheading that matches each of their original topic areas (main theme, prejudices, racial issues, struggles, successes). Students should tape their corresponding findings onto the poster for the entire class. (At the end there should be one chart with all the students findings listed under the appropriate subheading).

As a group the students should read over all the findings from each group and discuss the similarities and differences they see in the experiences of each minority group in Utah.

What will emerge is a list of the similarities and differences in the experiences of the various minority groups in Utah.

After students have discussed these ideas as a group, hold a class discussion on the issues.

### Day Three

Introduce to the class the oral history project (interview) they will conduct. Tell the students that they will be doing a project that is similar to what they have read.

Each student should begin the project by deciding what minority group they would like to interview someone from. Students should then think about whom they know that is a part of that group (students can interview friends, school employees, friends parents, neighbors, etc.). Try to encourage students to interview someone of an ethnic group other than their own.

Students should brainstorm questions they would ask someone of another minority group.

Once students have made a list of their interview questions, have the student's practice interviewing each other, using the questions they have come up with. It might also be helpful to discuss the students' questions as a class (or to collect the student's questions and review them before they conduct their interviews).

By the next class period each student should have someone to interview (assuming that the class does not meet everyday). Give students the [Interview Assignment Handout](#) and the [Interview Questionnaire Handout](#). Before the students begin their interviews, review or make copies of the [Interviewing Tips Handout](#).

Students should be given a week to complete this assignment.

#### Day Four

Today, change the focus away from personal stories and focus on the legal and historical events that effect minorities throughout the country. Using the "Immigration History and Legal Timeline" (website attached) discuss with students the major immigration laws and historical moments in U.S. culture. Ask the students to analyze and list what effect these laws have had on each of the minority group's culture, and traditions, and what stereotypes might have been reinforced through these laws. Have the students get together in their groups and discuss their thoughts. Students should draw upon their readings as well as their personal interviews to answer these questions. One person in the group should serve as the recorder. Once the groups have had time to discuss the issues, each group will report their thoughts to the class.

Conduct discussion with the entire class once each group has completed their reports. Remind the students of the date that their reports are due.

#### Day Five

Present the "Melting Pot" theory as represented by most US History Books. Ask the class if they have heard of this idea before and what it means? Even if students are not aware of the concept of the melting pot they should have an idea of what it stands for.

Either in a handout or on an overhead, have the students read the inscription on the base of the Statue of Liberty (attached). Discuss what this statement means and what their thoughts are of it. Based upon what the students know, what they have read, and what they have learned in their interviews have the students re-write the inscription to better reflect what they have learned about immigration and being an immigrant.

Have students share their statements in their small group and select a few students to share their work with the entire class.

As a class discuss the writing assignment and answer any student questions.

#### Strategies for Diverse Learners

This lesson plan has been designed to be used with basic, high risk, and/or ESL students. This material can be easily adapted for use with general or advanced students. To do this, the requirements for individual work (reading stories and creating reports on the reading) can be enhanced. The requirements for the interviews (length of interview, transcription, and analysis) can also be enhanced.

Students who are not able to conduct an interview (for a variety of reasons--language, social skills, etc) can have the individual fill-out the interview form as a questionnaire and the student can retype the answers into the form of a story.

#### Extensions

If tape recorders are not available the interviews can be done without a recorder and students can take written notes on their interviews.

More advanced students could be asked to write a letter to their state legislators on behalf of their minority community. Letters should include concerns regarding issues that current immigrants face because of older or current laws/policies.

### Bibliography

Kelen, L.G, & Stone, E.H. (2000). Missing Stories: An Oral History of Ethnic Minority Groups in Utah. Utah State University Press. Logan, UT.

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