

Link Title: Learning from Photos Subject: U.S. History (Social Studies)
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## Learning from Photos

### Summary

Students will discuss their thoughts on immigration, learn about the *Bracero* labor program, and use photographs to develop deeper understandings of the *Bracero* labor program.

### Objectives:

Students will be better able to

- describe aspects of the *Bracero* labor program, which operated from 1942 to 1964.
- use photographs as primary resources.

**Grade levels:** 6-8/9-12

### National Center for History Standards<sup>1</sup>:

#### U.S. History Standards

Standard 3C-The student understands the effects of World War II at home.

Standard 4A -The student understands the “Second Reconstruction” and its advancement of civil rights.

#### Historical Thinking Standards

Standard 2F- Appreciate historical perspectives.

Standard 2I- Draw upon the visual, literary, and musical sources.

Standard 4B- Obtain historical data.

### Materials:

- **Photographs:** several images are posted (photographs by Leonard Nadel) online at <http://www.braceroarchive.org> and from the exhibition, *America on the Move*, at the National Museum of American History [http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/themes/story\\_51\\_5.html](http://americanhistory.si.edu/onthemove/themes/story_51_5.html)
- Primary Sources: Bracero photographs from the Leonard Nadel collection at the National Museum of America History
- Bracero Photograph Analysis worksheet
- Computer with Internet access
- Printer
- Pen/pencil and paper

### Activity:

1. Divide the class into small groups. In small groups, have students discuss the following: What is immigration? What news, commentaries or stories have you

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<sup>1</sup> Standards available online: <http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/era9-5-12.html>

read or heard about immigration to the United States? Do you know anyone who has immigrated, either recently or in the past, to the U.S.?

This discussion is to prompt a dialogue between students and should not include a lecture. Also, each student should have equal and ample opportunity to describe what she/he has heard or learned about immigration from outside the usual classroom context.

**To extend this discussion**, consider having students create a concept web. ReadWriteThink offers an online [Webbing Tool](http://readwritethink.org/student_mat/student_material.asp?id=38) ([http://readwritethink.org/student\\_mat/student\\_material.asp?id=38](http://readwritethink.org/student_mat/student_material.asp?id=38)) that allows students to create webs online and print them to share.

2. Have students write short statements summarizing their thoughts about immigration.
3. Introduce students to the history of the *Bracero* labor program using the attached Background Information. You may want to share the content orally or have students read the essay individually.
4. Divide the class into small groups.
5. Hand each group one of the attached photographs to analyze and one of the attached *Bracero* Photograph Analysis sheets. Have them complete the first two columns (“evidence” and “conclusions”) based on the photograph.
6. After groups have completed the first two columns on the *Bracero* Photograph Analysis worksheet, have them access the Internet and view the photograph’s descriptive information
7. Have groups compare their “conclusions” to what is online. Students should compare their conclusions (column three in the *Bracero* Photograph Analysis Worksheet) to the information provided on the online title and description of the photograph.
8. Have students take notes on whether or not their conclusions match what is online. Are they the same? Different? What new information can be learned from the online title and description for the photograph? Record these notes in column four in the *Bracero* Photograph Analysis Worksheet.
9. Bring all of the small groups back together to report out on their findings. Be sure to ask them to mention the evidence they saw in the photographs that lead them to make conclusions.

**To extend this activity**, consider having students combine their knowledge of the *Bracero* labor program with their earliest thoughts on immigration. Ask students to reflect on whether this new knowledge impact (changes, confirms) the thoughts that they wrote down earlier (Step 2).

**Assessment:**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Level 1</b>	<b>Level 2</b>	<b>Level 3</b>	<b>Level 4</b>
Express ideas and opinions confidently, without domination	Rarely expresses ideas and opinions confidently, without domination	Sometimes expresses ideas and opinions confidently, without domination	Usually expresses ideas and opinions confidently, without domination	Always or almost always expresses ideas and opinions confidently, without domination
Use appropriate grammar and organization to express thoughts on immigration in written summary	Rarely uses appropriate grammar and organization to express thoughts on immigration in written summary	Sometimes uses appropriate grammar and organization to express thoughts on immigration in written summary	Usually uses appropriate grammar and organization to express thoughts on immigration in written summary	Always or almost always uses appropriate grammar and organization to express thoughts on immigration in written summary
Use evidence logically to support conclusions when examining photograph	Rarely uses evidence logically to support conclusions when examining photograph	Sometimes uses evidence logically to support conclusions when examining photograph	Usually uses evidence logically to support conclusions when examining photograph	Always or almost always uses evidence logically to support conclusions when examining photograph
Compare photo-based conclusions to online historic record	Briefly compares photo-based conclusions to full historic record	Adequately compares photo-based conclusions to full historic record	Competently compares photo-based conclusions to full historic record	Thoroughly compares photo-based conclusions to full historic record

## Bracero Photograph Analysis Worksheet

	<b>Evidence</b> <i>(What do you see in the photograph?)</i>	<b>Conclusion</b> <i>(What does that evidence make you think?)</i>	<b>Comparison</b> <i>(How does your conclusion compare to the information in the Web site?)</i>
Can you guess the decade when this photo was taken?			
What is the setting of the photo?			
Who can you see in the photo?			
Can you identify any specific objects in the photo?			
What actions are taken in the photo?			
Do you think this photo is posed or not?			

### Background Information

The economic and social upheaval stemming from both the Great Depression and World War II forced the United States to seek out a source of inexpensive labor to meet its manpower needs in both agriculture and railway maintenance.

Due to this need, a treaty was signed in 1942 between the United States and Mexico to alleviate the shortage of labor. With many American men sent off to fight in Europe and elsewhere, the recruitment and processing of an available pool of laborers from Mexico created what is called the *bracero* program. *Bracero* is a Spanish term which can be defined loosely as “one who works with his arms”, or as a close equivalent, as a field hand.

Under this program, Mexican workers, many of whom were rural peasants, were allowed to enter the United States on a temporary basis. Between 1942 and 1964, the year the

program ended, it was estimated that approximately 4.6 million Mexican nationals came to work in the U.S. as *braceros*.<sup>2</sup>

Many laborers faced an array of injustices and abuses, including substandard housing, discrimination, and unfulfilled contracts or being cheated out of wages. Nevertheless, the impact of the *bracero* program on the history and patterns of migration and settlement in the United States remains an important area to explore and assess, particularly in the contexts of civil rights, social justice, and Latino history in the United States.

Key facts and moments in *bracero* history include:

- August 4, 1942 – the Mexican Farm Labor Program Agreement is signed by the governments of Mexico and the United States, the first establishing the legalization and control of Mexican migrant workers along America’s southern border area
- April 29, 1943 – the Mexican Labor Agreement is sanctioned by Congress through *Public Law 45*
- The agreement guaranteed a minimum wage of 30 cents per hour and “humane treatment” for workers
- With many *braceros* remaining in the United States after their contracts ended, the Immigration and Naturalization Service began Operation Wetback in 1954. Many US-born children of Mexican *braceros* were wrongly repatriated, along with their parents.
- The *Bracero* program ended in 1964

Several short-term labor agreements existed until 1951, when Public Law 45 passed and was reluctantly signed by President Harry S. Truman.<sup>3</sup> Many labor groups viewed the program as a temporary fix to the labor shortages during WWII. After the war, when the soldiers returned, the labor groups then considered the presence of Mexican workers as a detriment to employing American laborers. Despite labor opposition, many large farm owners were still able to lobby Congress to change the agreement between Mexico and the United States and create *Public Law 78*. This law had to be renewed by vote on a biannual basis, until the program ended in 1964.

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<sup>2</sup> Pastor, M. and Alva, S. (2004) “Guest workers and the new transnationalism: Possibilities in an age of repression.” *Social Justice* 31, 1-2. 95. See also: Martin, P. (2000). “Guest worker programs for the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. Washington, DC: Center for Immigration Studies. Available online at <http://www.cis.org/articles/2000/back400.html>.

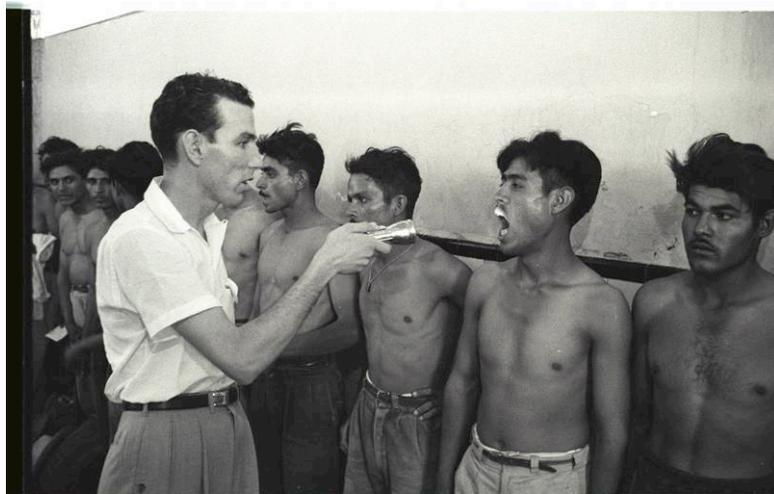
<sup>3</sup> According to an essay from *Rural Migration News*, available online, [http://migration.ucdavis.edu/rmn/more.php?id=10\\_0\\_4\\_0](http://migration.ucdavis.edu/rmn/more.php?id=10_0_4_0)

**Photographs by Leonard Nadel – Bracero program  
Smithsonian National Museum of American History**

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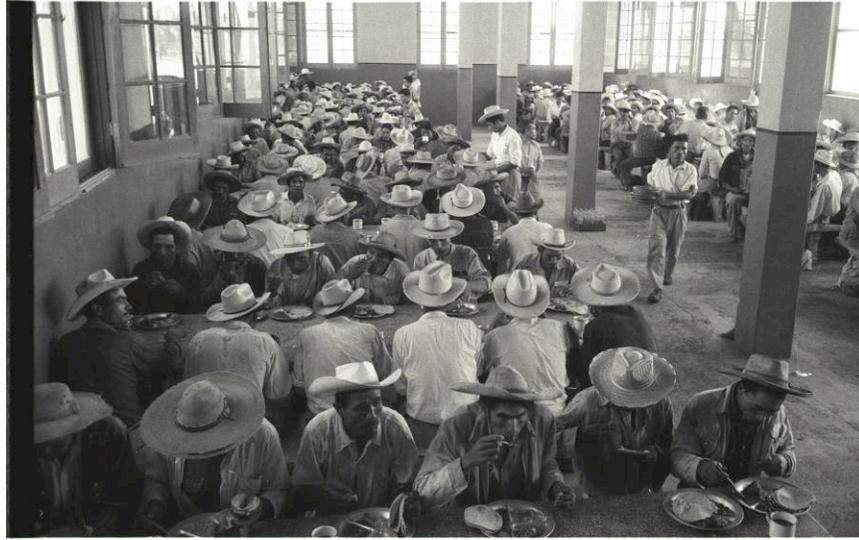
NAD-2004.0138.17.01



NAD-2004.013856.07



NAD-2004.0138.57.35



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