

Suggested Activities

Before your visit:

- Discuss these words: immigrate, immigration, immigrant. An immigrant is a person who has come to another country to settle. Immigration is the act of coming into a new country to settle there.
- Talk about what “culture” means. Ask your students to name some cultural activities their families practice (i.e. holidays, pastimes, etc.). Remind your students that American culture is a unique culture. Celebrating Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July are American cultural activities.
- Read one of the books listed below with your class.
- Discuss discrimination. Many immigrants face discrimination because of their ethnicity or their religion.

After your visit:

- Have your students learn about their own family’s heritage.
- Enjoy the diversity of San Mateo County by hosting a cultural festival in your classroom. Ask students to bring food and music from their own cultural heritage to share.

Resources:

- [My Name is Maria Isabel](#) by Alma Flor Ada
- [American Too](#) by Elisa Bartone
- [A Very Important Day](#) by Maggie Rugg Herold
- [How My Family Lives in America](#) by Susan Kuklin
- [Coming to America: The Story of Immigration](#) by Betsy Maestro
- [Baseball Saved Us](#) by Ken Mochizuki

People from Many Places



Teacher’s Guide

In this two-hour, interactive program your students will discover which cultural groups came to San Mateo County and some of the different reasons the immigrated here. First, the students will explore *Land of Opportunity: The Immigrant Experience in San Mateo County*. Then, the students will share what they have discovered as the docent leads them on a tour of the exhibit. Finally, we will do several hands-on activities which highlight the cultures in the exhibit. These activities may include playing games, making crafts, and learning dances.

To help your students make the most of this program, we have listed some activities you might want to do with your students before or after your visit to the museum.

This is a docent-led program. There are some variations in the tour format depending on which docent is leading the program.

San Mateo County History Museum

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What does being an immigrant mean?

Who is an immigrant?

Immigrants are people who move to another country to settle there.

Why would an immigrant leave his own country?

People leave their home country for many reasons. Some move here to have a better job or better schools for their children. They may move to this country to be closer to family who live here. Making the choice to leave their own country is never easy, but sometimes immigrants do not have a choice. Sometimes people immigrate to the United States because there is a war or a natural disaster in their country, and they are forced to leave.

When an immigrant arrives here, what does he/she need to do?

Once an immigrant arrives here, he must find a job and a place to live. Many immigrants to San Mateo County worked in fishing and farming when they first arrived here.

Do immigrants ever miss the country where they were born?

Immigrants often miss the country they left when they move here. Participating in cultural festivals and sharing their culture's music, dances, food and other traditions with people in their new country help immigrants maintain their culture and cope with feeling homesick.

Is being an immigrant difficult?

Being an immigrant can be hard. Immigrants face challenges like learning a new language and trying to understand a new culture. Sometimes immigrants face discrimination. People may make fun of immigrants for being different. Some immigrants to San Mateo County have a hard time getting jobs because they are from somewhere else.

The Many Cultures of San Mateo County

People from all over the world have come to San Mateo County and made this their home. Our exhibit focuses on seven of these many groups. Some of the county's earliest settlers came from China, Ireland, Italy, Japan and Portugal. More recently, many immigrants have moved here from Mexico and the Philippines.

Chinese In the early 1860s, Chinese immigrants helped build a railroad linking San Francisco to San Jose. In the 1870s and 1880s, they worked in the farming, lumbering and fishing industries in San Mateo County.

Irish A number of Irish immigrants came to the county in the 1850's. Early on, they farmed grains and potatoes. After 1856, they became involved in county politics.

Italian Italians started moving to San Mateo County in the 1850s. In the 1880s, they began arriving in larger numbers. Italian farmers brought some new vegetables to California including garlic, broccoli, eggplant, zucchini, bell peppers and artichokes.

Japanese Japanese immigrants first settled in San Mateo County in the 1890s, although a group of Japanese people had visited as early as 1872. The Japanese worked in many industries in the county. They were especially successful as flower-growers.

Portuguese Early Portuguese immigrants to San Mateo County arrived in the 1860s. Many of these settlers were in the whaling industry. They would harpoon whales and boil whale blubber down into oil for fuel.

Mexicans Spanish-speaking people have been in the county since the 1700s. In the 20th century, many Mexicans came to the county to work on farms under the federal government's Bracero Program. Even though that program ended in 1964, many Mexicans continue to come here to work on farms and in a variety of other industries.

Filipinos Augustin De Ocampo was one of the earliest Filipino residents. He came to Menlo Park after World War I. From the 1970s through the present, the number of Filipino immigrants in the county has been on the rise.