



The Impact of Place and Memory on Who We Are

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Grade Level: 8-12

Length: Three 55-minute class periods

Introduction

Ford's Theatre's production of Horton Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful* introduces us to a family that is yearning to achieve a way of life that is beyond their current circumstances. Each of the three main figures -- Mrs. Watts, Ludie and Jessie Mae -- speak to a desire for what they believe would be a better life. Through the lenses of place and memory, the trio grapples with the complex ideas of change, loss and agency in crafting the life they envision for themselves.

A dream that Mrs. Watts would like to fulfill, is to return to her childhood home of Bountiful, Texas. Although she migrated from the small town in search of a better future, financial constraints continue to impact her ability to return to the place she holds dear. Self-determination is one reason people immigrate or migrate, while others are compelled for reasons outside of their control. In this lesson, students will use primary and secondary sources to learn about people who have immigrated to the United States as well as migrated from one area of the country to another. They will examine the circumstances that may cause people to change geographical location, what it means to be separated from a place that has had significant meaning to one's life and how we keep the connection to place alive.

Students will also reflect on their own experiences. They will consider how their lives unfold by charting out the different stages of life, reflecting on where they are, and mapping out how to get to where they would like to be.

Common Core Standards:

CC.SSELA – LITERACY.RL 8.1

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

CCSS.ELA – Literacy. RH 9.10.2

Determine central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze primary and secondary sources about immigration and/or migration to identify the reasons that cause people to change location and the effects on the individual and their relationship to home and sense of place.
- Examine an excerpt from *The Trip to Bountiful* for perspective, extending their understanding of difference and build empathy.
- Gain a deeper understanding of the text by adapting it into a visual representation of the language.
- Make connections to their own experiences and to those of others in their communities
- Identify their own phase in the developmental journey and reflect on how each stage relates to agency and self-determination.
- Reflect on how students view getting older and the characteristics inherent to the life stages ahead.
- Craft a plan for accomplishing their live goals.

Guiding Questions

- What are some of the circumstances that restrict a person from having agency over their life choices?
- How does one's role in society change as we get older?
- What conditions may cause someone to relocate to a new area?
- How does changing towns, cities, neighborhoods, or countries impact our experiences and how we view the world and our place in it?

Procedures:

Lesson Activity One – Immigration and Migration

In this activity, students will explore primary and secondary sources and historical accounts that speak to different immigration and migration stories in U.S. history and today. They will learn about different circumstances that resulted in a geographic change in location and how that affected the person's or a people's connection to the place they left and the place they came to inhabit.

Lesson Activity Two: Memory and Place

In this activity, students will reflect on their own experiences and how memory and technology can play a role in their connection to place-based experiences. They will be in dialogue with other students, recalling and recounting a memory of a specific event. They will then choose a medium through which they will document their memory.

Lesson Activity Three: Time of Your Life

Students will create a list of life stages and brainstorm how the responsibilities, connection to place, and community may change with each stage. They will also reflect on their own perceptions of getting older and make connections to how society views aging.

Lesson Activity One: Immigration and Migration

Primary Source and Secondary Source work: This can be done as a class, in small groups or individually.

Students should select one account of immigration and/or migration in the United States to read, listen to or watch. The resources below are offered as a suggestion. If possible, include immigration or migration accounts that reflect your community.

- This may include researching the indigenous tribal land on which your school resides. Native Land Map: <https://native-land.ca>
- Short Quotes from immigrants who have been passed through Ellis Island. <https://www.nps.gov/elis/learn/education/primary-sources-for-your-classroom.htm>
- Contemporary videos of immigrations stories from people across the nation. <https://immigrantarchiveproject.org/videos/>
- National Archive article about the African American Great Migration. [The Great Migration \(1910-1970\) | National Archives](#)
- Learning Resource from the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian [Removal of the Potawatomi Nation | Interactive Case Study \(si.edu\)](#)

Individual or Small Group work: After the students have read, listened to or watched the immigration and/or migration account, they should respond to the following questions:

Discussion Questions:

- Reflecting on the resource you explored, what factors contributed to the person or people relocating to a new area?
- What challenges did the people face and how did they overcome those challenges?
- What were the immediate impacts of the move? What are the intergenerational impacts of the relocation?
- What benefits and or losses were experienced because of the change in location? How did the move shift how the people felt about their connection to the place they left behind?

Individual or small group work:

If working individually, students should write responses to the questions on paper or in a notebook. Once finished, the students should pair up with a partner to share and discuss responses.

If working in small groups, students should individually write responses and then share and discuss their responses in the group.

Outside of class time: Community Interview

Students will conduct an interview with a family member or person in their community about immigration or migration. There is an interview document that can be used to document the answers.

- Have you or someone you know, left a home that is difficult to return to? What circumstances make it difficult to return to a specific place?
- If you could move to a different location, where would you go and what would you hope to experience there?
- What are the ways in which you feel connected to the place you live now?

During the interview, they should be able to reflect on an experience other than their own and connect it to one of the questions the lesson explored which includes: What causes a person or people to move locations? How does that affect how they relate to the place they left? The bottom section of the worksheet offers room for students to reflect on the information learned in the interview. Students will share their interviews with the class during the next class meeting.

Lesson Activity Two: Memory and Place

Interview Sharing: Students share their family or community member interviews with the class. Student interview documents can be collected as an assessment after all students have shared.

Memory and Place: Share with students that today you will focus on the power of place in our memories. Ask students to think about a place that they visited once, a long time ago. It should be more than five years, but this amount can differ depending on the age of your students. Some students may not have the luxury to have traveled far away from their immediate community. Reassure students that the place can be somewhere local, visited with family, friends, or school during a field trip, etc. Tell students to imagine that they are there and picture it in their minds - imagining the sights, smells, temperatures, sounds, etc. Students should allow themselves to be flooded with memories of the place and the experience they had there.

Give your students one to two minutes, depending on their learning styles, to list or draw as many details as possible about their time there. In addition to the details, students should note what they were doing, whom they encountered and how they felt being there.

Class Discussion: This reflection can be conducted as a whole group.

- How many details were the students able to recall about the place they visited?
- How does being older, shift how they reflect and recall the experience?
- How are they different now as opposed to then?
- How might they relate to the same place and experience, people, and activities if they were to go back and the place again?
- How would they feel if they were not able to visit either location again? What are the ways in which they could hold onto those memories if they started to fade?

Connecting to Text:

Students should read silently the scene excerpt from the Horton Foote's *The Trip to Bountiful*. In the monologue, Mrs. Watts describes her desire to return to Bountiful. Pg 60 (Act 1, Scene Four).

Group discussion and text analysis:

- Which words or phrases stand out the most to you and why? (Students can underline or circle the text.)
- What pictures are created in your mind when you hear or read the text?
- What does this scene make you feel? What lines or moments in the text do that?
- What are some of the big ideas present in the scene, based on what you picture in your head and what you feel?
- What connections do you make to your own experience or those of others in your community?

Exit Slip Drawing Activity: Each student will complete an independent drawing. They will reflect on the monologue and identify words or phrases that evoke imagery. They will create an image inspired by the text and express it on paper. They can incorporate the use of words from the monologue to anchor their image.

Draw a moment from the monologue. It doesn't have to be fancy, just include the images that most resonate with you and ideally capture a theme/idea you want to highlight from the text. Experiment with incorporating the use of the written word as a part of your drawing.

Lesson Activity Three: Time of your life

In the play *The Trip to Bountiful*, we meet two generations of a family who are living together in Houston, Texas. Mrs. Watts would like to return to her childhood home of Bountiful, Texas, and live out the rest of her days there. Her adult son is trying to build a future for himself and his wife, and although there have been struggles, he is gaining the courage to ask for a raise at work to improve their financial situation. Each of them had a vision of what they thought their life would be like. We will examine the different life stages and students will have the opportunity to create a plan for achieving their life goals.

Visual Thinking: Ask the students to look at the family photo from the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery Exhibition, *Hung Liu: Portraits of Promised Lands*. Ask them to examine the people in the photo and reflect on what they see.

Click on the link below which will take you to a collection of paintings and photos. You can browse through the collection. For this lesson, we recommend the "[Hung Liu's Family Photos](#)" image.

Individually, students can read or listen to the text and write responses to the prompts below. In pairs, students should discuss their responses, as well as their emotional reactions or connections to the photo.

[Smartify | Hung Liu: Portraits of Promised Lands](#)

- What do you see?
- What do you think is going on in this work of art?

- If you could ask a person in the photograph a question, whom would you ask? What would you ask them?

Group Discussion:

Ask students to list out what they believe are the phases of life from infant to senior citizen.

- What major milestones are associated with each phase?
- What is one newly able to do?
- What does someone have access to that they did not before?
- What are the additional responsibilities that one traditionally takes on with each stage?
- How do friendships and relationships with family change with each phase?
- Do you have any fears or concerns about any of the milestones ahead?

Assessment: Students should be able to recognize the connection between each life phase, increased skills, responsibilities, and shifts in relationships.

Exit Slip: Have the students craft a plan for how they will achieve the life that they want. They can create a plan using five-year increments. A worksheet is attached for students to use as the framework for their exploration. The discussion questions below can be considered when crafting a plan.

Materials:

- Magazines, pens, paper.
- *The Trip to Bountiful* scene selection (attached), access to review online resources linked below.
- Community interview sheet
- Life Stages Worksheet