

IV. Italian Immigrant Narrative

Subject(s):

Time Needed: 50 minute class session

Objectives:

- ✓ reading comprehension
- ✓ recognize immigrant and travel narrative
- ✓ engage written text
- ✓ encounter and begin to understand other cultures and languages

Areas/Disciplines Covered:

English (reading)
Ethnic Studies (immigration, ethnicity)
History (local, US, international)
Italian (language)

Materials:

- chalk and chalkboard or markers and chart paper
- handout of Maria Guerrera narrative, “Why Return to Pontelandolfo?” in Bologna and Marano, *Growing Up Italian and American in Waterbury*
- homework assignment

Procedure:

1. Begin the class by asking, “Were any of you born in another country?” You may have a student or two who will respond affirmatively. After following with where they were born, tell the students that you will be discussing immigrant and immigration today. By this point, they should have some familiarity with “Brass City Life” but reiterate to them the fact that America and Waterbury are made up of immigrant groups. The group that you will discuss today are Italians.

2. Give the students some background on Italians in Waterbury. You should include stats as well as first hand knowledge (where applicable), such as:

- Immigrant Vincenzo Sica estimated that there were between 25 and 30,000 Italians living in Waterbury in 1927.
- In the 1990 census, 19% of Connecticut was composed of Italian heritage.
- Nearly 30% of Waterburians identified Italian as their first or second ancestry in the same census year (1990).

source: Bologna and Marano, Growing Up Italian and American in Waterbury

3. Next, tell the students that you are going to give them a chance to speak Italian. Based on the level of your students, you can simply use one word such as *paesani* (which means “friend (like family)”) or an entire sentence, such as “*E al momento, tutto abbiamo in italiano*” (“And, at the moment, all is Italian.”) Write the words or sentences on the board for the students and pronounce it for and then with them. [Make sure that your pronunciation is correct beforehand.]

4. Now handout and introduce the reading. Start by asking the students about narrative. Do they know what it is? Why is narrative important? (for historical records, etc) Highlight the text that the piece comes from, noting that it is an entire anthology of Italian American narratives. Then read the italicized portion of the handout for the students in order to give them a sense of whom Maria Guerrera is. They should continue the reading outloud.

5. After the reading is finished, have a set of prepared questions for them to answer in class. Some you may consider are:

- What were her experiences like in Pontelandolfo?
- What were her experiences like here?
- Have you ever moved?
- What was your experience in the new place?

6. End the class by handing out the prepared assignment sheet, due the following day. [see worksheet]

Related Resources:

Italian Immigrant Narrative Worksheet

Please answer the following questions about the reading
“Why Return to Pontelandolfo?”:

1. What is the name of the author?
2. What was the birth name of the author?
3. How was this piece gathered? Was it:
 - a. a diary entry
 - b. a speech
 - c. an interview
4. When did the author’s grandfather emigrate to America?
 - a. 1915
 - b. 1921
 - c. 1955
5. What city was the author in when she got off the boat from Italy in 1955?
 - a. New York City
 - b. Waterbury
 - c. Boston
6. Which school did the author NOT attend:
 - a. Webster School
 - b. St. Jude School
 - c. St. Thomas School
7. Where do the author and her family live?
 - a. Wolcott
 - b. Waterbury
 - c. Wallingford
8. What radio station do Lupangelo Guerrera and Leonardo Cotugno work for?
 - a. WKKV
 - b. WATR
 - c. WNTY
9. How many children does the author have?
10. Which one of these names IS NOT a name of one of the author’s sons?
 - a. Nico
 - b. Angelo
 - c. Tony

