

Options Role Play Instructions

(General instructions – may change to suit the class)

1. Need 5 groups; 4 options and the Congressional subcommittee (optimal to have 4 in each group but may be larger or smaller).
 - Set classroom up where the subcommittee is in front, options report to this group.
 - Each member of the option group gets a copy of their option, presenting your option and an evaluation form
 - Each member of the subcommittee gets an “Options in Brief” sheet, their role and question sheet and an evaluation form.
2. Directions to the groups.
 - Each option group has specific roles (members) that need to create a 5 minute presentation to the subcommittee about their proposal on immigration.
 - The subcommittee decides on 2 questions to ask each group after they present and after all have given their proposals, they declare what immigration policy the US will adopt and state the reasons why.
 - Everyone should take notes on the pros and cons of each option so that they may have information when writing their own opinion on immigration policy.
3. Jigsaw Deliberation
 - After the presentations, form other groups with one member from each option and the subcommittee, members should discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each option and proposal, the evaluation sheet can then be filled out more fully.

Options in Brief

Option 1: Open Ourselves to the World

As we enter the twenty-first century, the forces of globalization are rapidly creating a new world. International trade is steadily expanding, while national borders are losing their significance. People, ideas, and goods traverse the globe at an ever-accelerating pace. Americans can take pride in a heritage that promotes openness, tolerance, and diversity. Immigration puts our country in touch with the tastes and preferences of consumers worldwide, and gives U.S. companies an edge in opening export markets. Keeping our doors open lets the world know that the United States remains a country that looks forward to tomorrow.

Option 2: Make Emigration Unnecessary

As the new century unfolds, the world is on the move. The population explosion in poor countries, the spread of war and terror, and the age-old curses of hunger and disease are driving increasing numbers to our shores. Opening our doors to large-scale immigration resolves no one's problems. It only overburdens our schools and health care system and drains poor countries of many of their most educated, highly skilled workers. We cannot continue to absorb new immigrants into this country at this breakneck pace without compromising our economy and social structure. Nonetheless, both for practical and for humanitarian reasons we should join with the international community to provide the development assistance necessary to stabilize the migration of the world's poor.

Option 3: Admit the Talent We Need

Economic competition among nations in the twenty-first century is set to reach new levels of intensity. In today's world, the United States must be prepared to compete in an increasingly demanding global marketplace. Immigration policy should be designed first to serve our country's economic needs, not to solve the world's problems. To spur American high-tech industries forward, our doors should be open to scientists and engineers from abroad. To help American factories, farms, and service industries hold down costs, we should allow a limited number of foreigners to work temporarily in low-wage jobs.

Option 4: Restrict Immigration

The world is changing at a breakneck pace. The population explosion, war, terror, hunger, and disease plague an ever-growing portion of humanity. We must recognize that Americans can do little to end the misery that haunts much of the world. Simply maintaining our way of life amounts to a major challenge. Although the United States is a nation of immigrants, the arguments supporting massive immigration have long since passed into history. Now it is time to say enough. We should drastically reduce the number of immigrants we accept and commit the resources necessary to take control of our borders.

U. S. Immigration Policy: What should we do?

Option 2: Make Emigration Unnecessary

As the new century unfolds, the world is on the *move*. The population explosion in poor countries, the spread of war and terror, and the age-old curses of hunger and disease are driving increasing numbers to our shores. Emigration from the developing world is at an all time high, and the United States is the destination for the largest percentage of these emigrants. Opening our doors to large-scale immigration resolves no one's problems. Admitting huge numbers of newcomers into the United States every year not only overburdens our schools and health care system, it drains poor countries of many of their most educated, highly skilled workers. This "brain drain" only adds to the challenge in poor countries of meeting the needs of their own populations.

We are a strong country, but we cannot continue to absorb new immigrants into this country at this breakneck pace and without compromising our own economy and social structure. Nonetheless, both for practical and for humanitarian reasons we cannot fence ourselves off from poverty and suffering outside of our borders. As the strongest economic power on earth and the most sought destination of the world's poor, the burden of international leadership on this issue rests with the United States. We should join with the international community to provide the development assistance necessary to stabilize the migration of the world's poor. We should also explore ways to create incentives for the best and brightest in the developing world to stay where they are and contribute their skills to improve conditions in their own countries. By improving life among the world's poor and disadvantaged, we can get a grip on the forces that drive desperate immigrants to our country's shores. Ultimately, we will all be better off.

What policies should we pursue?

- Expand foreign aid and trade benefits to help governments in the developing world to strengthen their economies and reduce the flow of immigration to the United States.
- Join other developed countries to coordinate the resettlement of existing refugees and prevent future refugee crises.
- Apply consistent, humane standards in granting political asylum to refugees, rather than mold refugee policy to suit political purposes.
- Reduce the number of immigration visas awarded annually to 600,000, including refugees.

Option 2 is based on the following beliefs

In today's interconnected world, we must accept that the problems affecting other countries are America's problems as well.

- By developing well-crafted programs of foreign aid and trade benefits, the United States can help people in poor countries improve their lives.
- While we have an obligation to reduce suffering wherever possible, we have a primary responsibility to the well-being of those here at home.

Arguments for

- Expanding foreign aid programs and trade benefits for the developing world will reduce the drain of highly skilled workers from poor countries and also reduce the anger that fuels terrorism.
- Developing refugee policies that are consistent and humane will bolster the U.S. image throughout the world.
- Reducing the level of immigration to the United States will reduce the drain on our social service resources and allow us to better monitor those who come.

Arguments against

- Dumping money into new foreign aid programs will come at the expense of addressing other, more pressing needs.
- Closing our doors to immigrants will increase resentment of the United States.
- Awarding immigration visas on the basis of humanitarian concerns, rather than economic priorities will not significantly lower U.S. spending on social services for newcomers.
- As past failures show, U.S. assistance can not overcome the crippling poverty and social chaos plaguing much of the developing world.
- Without high levels of immigration, the United States will lack the talent and energy to strengthen our country and address future problems.
- No matter what we do, people will always want to come to the United States.

U. S. Immigration Policy: What should we do?

Option 3: Admit the Talent We Need

Economic competition among nations in the twenty-first century is set to reach new levels of intensity. In today's world, the United States must be prepared to compete in an increasingly demanding global marketplace and adapt to the relentless pace of technological change. In the last few years, our country's economy has been going through a wrenching readjustment. Businesses are cutting jobs. Government programs are being trimmed; Workers are being forced to do more with less. While our economy has emerged from the trials of downsizing leaner and stronger, the economic recession that has hit in the first years of the new century is taking a toll. We must make sure that our country's immigration policy is in line with our economic priorities. After calling on working Americans to tighten their belts, we owe them nothing less.

Every country has the right to promote its national interests. The United States should be no different. We cannot afford to admit into our country every year hundreds of thousands of newcomers who will be a burden on our society. Immigration policy should be designed first to serve our country's economic needs, not to solve the world's problems. A two-pronged approach makes the most sense. To spur American high-tech industries forward, our doors should be open to scientists and engineers from abroad. To help American factories, farms, and service industries hold down costs, we should allow a limited number of foreigners to work temporarily in low-wage jobs. By forging ahead with a realistic, far-sighted strategy, we can make immigration policy work for the United States.

What policies should we pursue?

- Award two hundred thousand immigration visas annually for skilled workers and their families, making the advancement of science and technology the top priority in guiding immigration policy.
- Reduce total annual immigration to five hundred thousand, including refugees, making adjustments to reflect economic conditions. (During an economic downturn, the number of immigration visas should be decreased, while during an economic expansion the number should be increased.)
- Allow a limited number of foreigners to work temporarily in the United States in agriculture and other industries facing labor shortages.
- Offer scholarships to foreign graduate students in science, engineering, and other high-tech fields, provided they will work in the United States for at least five years.
- Deny education, health care, and other social services to illegal aliens, except in cases of emergency.

Option 3 is based on the following beliefs

- Maintaining our economy's competitive edge is essential to the well-being of Americans.
- Promoting America's economic strength should be the guiding principle underlying our country's immigration policy.
- Skilled, well-educated immigrants are most capable of contributing to the betterment of the United States.

Arguments for

- Admitting highly skilled immigrants who are well-suited to the demands of the U.S. economy will help hold down government costs for welfare, health care, and other social services.
- Tailoring U.S. immigration policy to the needs of our economy will attract immigrants who have the most to offer to American industry, especially in high-tech fields.
- Permitting the entry of temporary foreign workers into the labor force will help low-wage industries remain in the United States while competing in the global market.

Arguments against

- Limiting immigration to the well-educated discriminates against worthy applicants who have been deprived of an opportunity to educate themselves.
- Pursuing an immigration policy that overlooks the concerns of other countries will damage U.S. foreign relations, especially with our neighbors to the south.
- Drawing the best and brightest skilled workers from poor countries will undercut economic development in much of the world and harm international stability.
- Admitting foreigners as temporary workers and denying social services to illegal aliens will create a group of second-class citizens with few rights and little stake in American society.
- Reducing the number of immigration visas available for family reunification will leave many close relatives apart.
- Assisting foreign graduate students in science and engineering will deprive Americans of jobs and educational opportunities, and leave many of our most important high-tech industries dominated by foreign-born workers.

U.S. Immigration Policy: What should we do?

Option 4: Restrict Immigration

The world is changing at a breakneck pace. The population explosion, war, terror, hunger, and disease plague an ever-growing portion of humanity. The United States is a strong country, but it cannot solve the world's problems. As the planet's population soars from six billion today to an estimated ten billion by the year 2050, we must recognize that Americans can do little to end the misery that haunts much of the world. On the contrary, the forces of economic change have left millions of Americans struggling to keep up. Many of us are working longer hours than ever just to make ends meet. Schools are overcrowded and underfunded, while health care costs have skyrocketed. Simply maintaining our way of life amounts to a major challenge.

The arguments supporting massive immigration in the United States have long since passed into history. At a time when our country is trimming back social services for our own citizens, we can hardly afford to keep the door open every year to roughly one million newcomers from poor nations. The world's disadvantaged people cannot be blamed for wanting to enter the United States. Many of them lead lives of desperation and hopelessness. But the United States has already given enough. For decades, we have accepted more immigrants than all the other countries of the world combined. Now it is time to say stop. We have the right to preserve the uniquely American culture that has been created over the past two centuries. We have a duty to stop the senseless influx of unskilled immigrants that holds down wages for struggling American workers. We should drastically reduce the number of immigrants we accept and commit the resources necessary to take control of our borders. The threat of runaway change must be brought under control.

What policies should we pursue?

- Reduce the number of immigration visas awarded annually to the level set in 1965—two hundred ninety thousand—including refugees.
- Strengthen border control by tripling the number of Border Patrol agents, constructing impassable barriers at major crossing points along the U.S.-Mexican border, and swiftly deporting foreigners who overstay their visas.
- Introduce a national identity card that all workers would be required to present when applying for employment and social services.
- Pressure the governments of the Caribbean to take steps to prevent mass movements of refugees to the United States.
- Insist that those seeking political asylum apply at U.S. embassies in foreign countries.
- End the policy of granting automatic citizenship to the children of foreigners born in the United States.

Option 4 is based on the following beliefs

- The United States is one of the few islands of stability and prosperity in a world marked largely by poverty and desperation.
- Continued high levels of immigration could overwhelm America's unique culture.
- High levels of immigration deprive America's poor of opportunities for economic advancement.

Arguments for

- Reducing immigration will allow the United States to hold down spending for education, health care, and other social services.
- Restoring firm control over our borders will help us reduce the flow of drugs into the United States and strengthen our defenses against international terrorism.
- Lowering the number of newcomers entering the U.S. labor market will make more jobs available for American workers, especially those with few skills.

Arguments against

- Fencing off our neighbors to the south and restricting immigration from abroad will fuel anti-American sentiment throughout the world, and harm relations with many of our leading trading partners.
- Closing the door on new immigrants will deprive the American work force of skills, talent, and ambition.
- Introducing a national identity card will make foreign-born Americans a target for suspicion and discrimination.
- Drastically reducing immigration will create a society that lacks a solid understanding of the world beyond our borders.
- Without young immigrants entering the country, American workers will face a heavy burden in supporting the steadily increasing elderly population.
- Severely cutting back immigration will leave many recently arrived Americans separated from close family members in their native lands.

Presenting Your Option

Preparing Your Presentation

Your Assignment: Your group has been called upon to appear before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims of the House of Representatives. Your assignment is to persuade the subcommittee members that your option should be the basis for U.S. policy. You will be judged on how well you present your option.

Organizing Your Group: Each member of your group will take a specific role. Below is a brief explanation of the responsibilities for each role. You may choose one member to present before the subcommittee or any number of group members.

1. **Group Organizer:** Your job is to organize your group's three-five minute presentation to the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims. In organizing your presentation, you will receive help from the other members of your group. Read your option and review the reading to build a strong case for your option. Keep in mind that although you are expected to take the lead in organizing your group, your group will be expected to make the presentation together.

2. **Domestic Policy Analyst:** Your job is to explain how your option would improve the lives of Americans here at home. Carefully read your option, and then review Part II of the reading. Make sure that your area of expertise is reflected in the presentation of your group.

3. **Foreign Policy Analyst:** Your job is to explain how your option would address our international interests. Carefully read your option, and then review Part II of the reading. Make sure that your area of expertise is reflected in the presentation of your group.

4. **Historian:** Your job is to show how the lessons of history support your option. Carefully read your option, and then review Part I of the reading. Make sure that your area of expertise is reflected in the presentation of your group.

Making Your Case

After your preparations are completed, your group will deliver a three-to-five minute presentation to the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims. Notes may be used and any member may speak that your group has chosen. You should speak clearly and convincingly. During the other presentations, you should try to identify the weak and strong points of the other options. After all of the groups have presented their options, members of the subcommittee will ask you clarifying questions. Any member of your group may respond during the cross examination period.

Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims Hearing on U.S. Immigration Policy

Your Role:

You serve as a member of the Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims in the House of Representatives. Your subcommittee is the starting point for much of the legislation affecting U.S. immigration policy. As you know the rapid pace of change internationally and new challenges here at home have again placed immigration in the national spotlight. These hearings will introduce you to four distinct approaches to this question.

Your Assignment:

While the four option groups are organizing their presentations, you should prepare two questions regarding each of the options. Your questions should be challenging and designed to clarify the differences among the options. For example, a good question for Option 1 might be:

Isn't there a danger that high levels of immigration will overburden our country's social service system?

The four option groups will present their positions. After their presentations are completed, your teacher will call on you and your fellow subcommittee members to ask questions. The "Evaluation Form" you receive is designed for you to record your impressions of the option groups

Questions for the Options

Option 1:

1.

2.

Option 2:

1.

2.

Option 3:

1.

2.

Option 4:

1.

2.

Evaluation Form

Pros of Argument

Cons of Argument

Option 1 – Open Ourselves to the World

Option 2 – Make Emigration Unnecessary

Option 3 – Admit the Talent We Need

Option 4 – Restrict Immigration

Assessment – Option 5

You have had an opportunity to consider 4 options on US immigration policy. Each had its own risks, trade-offs, advantages, and disadvantages. Now it is time to form your own perspective.

Beliefs: Rate each of the statements according to your personal beliefs

1 = strongly support 2 = support 3 = oppose 4 = strongly oppose 5 = undecided

___ US policy should be based on a realistic assessment of US national interests, not on lofty international ideals.

___ As the most powerful nation in the world, the US is capable of addressing suffering abroad while helping the disadvantaged here at home

___ US national security begins by protecting US borders

___ The problems affecting most poor countries are only going to get worse, regardless of US assistance programs overseas

___ The US must remain a symbol of hope and opportunity for the people of the world

___ Americans will face a struggle in the coming decades just to maintain their present lifestyle

___ The greatness of the US is based on its diversity and openness to fresh ideas

___ The US cannot isolate itself from problems beyond our borders

___ The ability to compete in the global economy will determine the fate of the US in the coming century

Creating Your Own Option: Now you need to create an immigration option that reflects your own beliefs and opinions. You may borrow heavily from one option or you may combine ideas from the various options. There is no right or wrong answer. Rather, you should strive to craft an option that is logical and persuasive. Be careful of contradictions. For example, you should not sharply reduce immigration if you believe that cultural diversity and fresh ideas are essential to our country's strength.

1. What is the title (focus) of your option? (5 points)

2. Explain why you believe this is the best decision for the US to make in regards to immigration policy in 5-7 sentences. (10 points)

3. What are the advantages and disadvantages for the US if we adopt your proposal? (5 points)

4. Explain and give examples how your policy reflects the beliefs that you supported and opposed earlier. (5 points)