

TELL YOUR IMMIGRATION STORY



In July 4, 1864, the day Abraham Lincoln arrived at the Cottage for his final season here, he signed into law An Act to Encourage Immigration. Signed less than a year before his death, the Act embodied principles that had taken root in Lincoln as a young man.

The United States of America is, and always has been, a nation of immigrants. Abraham Lincoln recognized immigrants as one of America's greatest resources and its best hope for the future. He believed America offered immigrants the full realization of its founding promises and a fair chance to succeed. Our world is different from Lincoln's, but some of these very principles continue to draw immigrants to the United States 150 years later.

This exercise encourages students to trace their own immigration story, and using the world map poster on page 3, connect their family's different stories of coming to America with where they call home today.

For additional resources and research about immigration in the US today, visit the American Immigration Council's [website](#).

For additional information about immigration in the US during Lincoln's time, you can visit us at www.lincolncottage.org. [This article](#) is a great starting point.

President Lincoln's Cottage hosted American by Belief, a special exhibit on Lincoln and immigration, from October 2015 to October 2019 in the Robert H. Smith Visitor Education Center. Find more information about the exhibit [here](#).

AMERICAN
BY BELIEF

Age Group:

Ages 9 and up

Time to complete:

About 45 minutes

Materials:

- ♦ *World Map poster on page 3*
- ♦ *Paper and pencil*
- ♦ *Markers in a variety of colors:
Teal, Red, Orange, Yellow, Blue,
Grey*

PROCEDURE:

- ◆ Start by researching how your family members came to America. Students can ask older family members - parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents - where they are from and what they know about their family's journey to the United States. For older students, you can supplement these conversations with primary source research on a platform like Ancestry.com. If parts of your family don't know exactly how or when they came to America, include that as well. What happened to your family to create those gaps? That's also part of the American story.
- ◆ Next, your student(s) should write out their family's immigration story on their piece of paper. For examples of stories contributed to our exhibit, you can look at [the archive](#).
- ◆ Using the key below, student(s) should choose a color that most closely reflects the reason why they or their family members came to America.
- ◆ Using that color marker, your student(s) should mark their family's journey on the map, starting from their origin point and connecting to their destination in the US.
- ◆ If you have multiple family members who came to America from different places or for different reasons, add their journeys to the map as well.
- ◆ Once your map is complete, attach the story to it so they can be displayed together.
- ◆ To close, discuss with your student(s): What does it mean to be an American? What is American about *you*?

Categories & Reasons for immigrating:

Teal:



REFUGE
& ASYLUM

Red:



FAMILY

Orange:



JOBS

Yellow:



FREEDOM

Blue:



EDUCATION

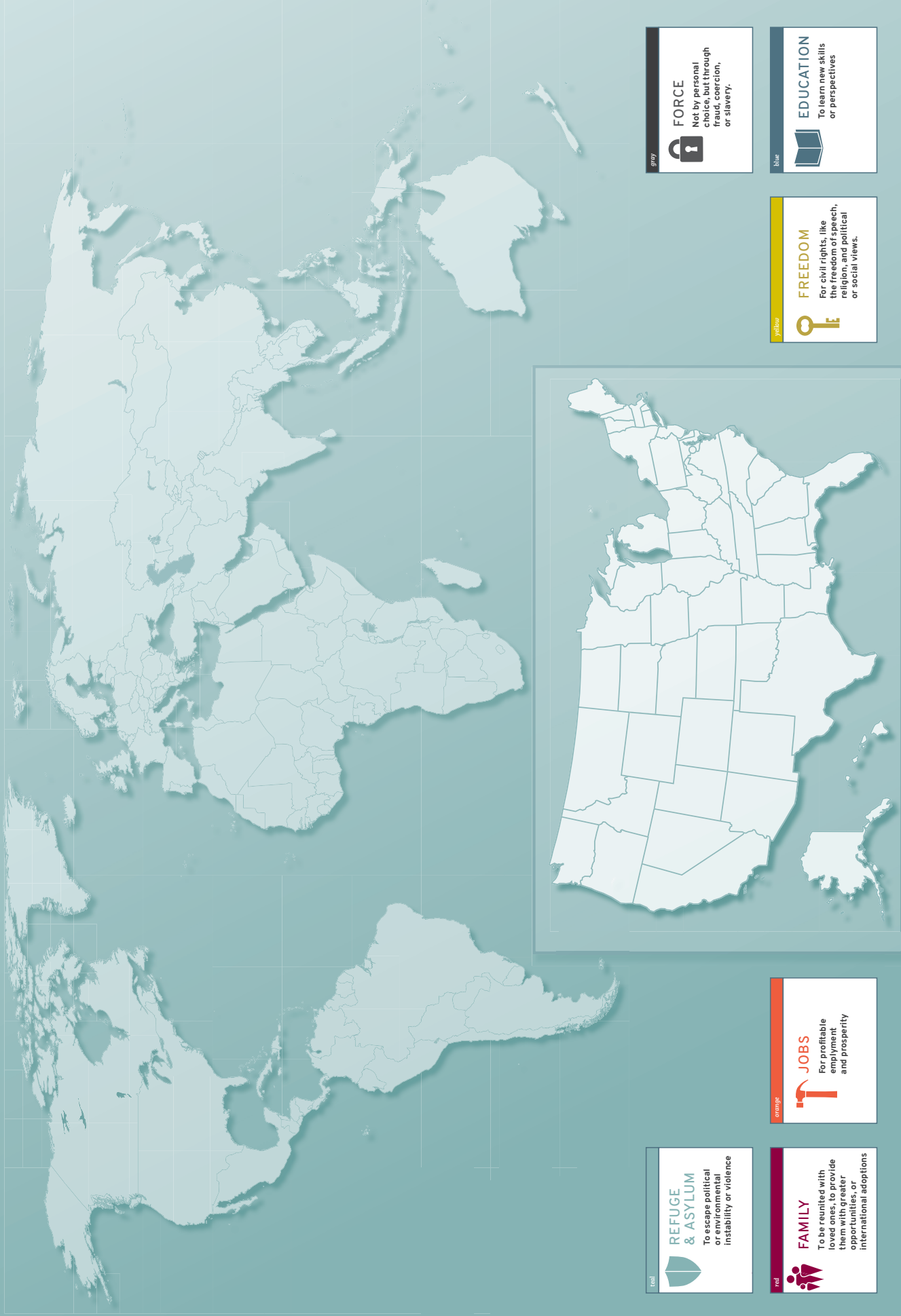
Grey:



FORCE



TELL YOUR IMMIGRATION STORY



REFUGE & ASYLUM
To escape political or environmental instability or violence

FAMILY
To be reunited with loved ones, to provide them with greater opportunities, or international adoptions

JOB
For profitable employment and prosperity

FORCE
Not by personal choice, but through fraud, coercion, or slavery.

EDUCATION
To learn new skills or perspectives

FREEDOM
For civil rights, like the freedom of speech, religion, and political or social views.