

Teacher's Guide and Questions for Classroom Use from
***A Nation of Nations* by Tom Gjelten**

1. The author's grandfather immigrated to the United States from Norway, following the trail of others in his family. In what ways was their immigration experience similar to the experience of people who came to the United States one hundred years later, from other parts of the world? In what ways was it different? (Prologue, Chapters 1–4, 11)

2. According to the author, when was the United States first characterized as an “exceptional” nation, and in what sense was it considered unique? (Prologue)

3. In the 1950s, it was difficult for someone from Korea to get permission to immigrate to the United States. Why was Pong Suk able to do so when so many other Koreans could not? (Chapter 1)

4. Think about the stories from Korea and Bolivia. What would you say the people who left their countries have in common with one another? What distinguishes them from people who choose to stay put? (Chapters 1–4)

5. Immigrants are often said to take jobs that native-born American workers don't want. Do you see examples of that in the stories the author tells? (Chapters 1–4, 12, 13)

6. Describe some of the hardships and discouraging situations experienced by the immigrants profiled in this book. What obstacles do they have to overcome in order to adapt to life in America? (Chapters 2–6, 12–14)

7. In some predominantly African American neighborhoods, the sudden arrival of a large number of immigrant families resulted in conflict. What are some of the reasons for this phenomenon? (Chapter 6)

8. J. E. B. Stuart High School, during the years when many immigrants were arriving, had some of the lowest average student achievement scores in Fairfax County, but minority and ESL students did better at Stuart than anywhere else in the county. How was this possible? What challenges did this present for the school leadership? (Chapter 7)

9. Anti-immigrant sentiment has a long history in American political culture. Who were the first immigrant groups to encounter hostility in the United States? What was said about them? What efforts were undertaken by immigration opponents to limit the influx of foreigners? (Chapter 8)

10. In what ways is the current debate over immigration an echo of the debate in the early years of the twentieth century? What cultural concerns were raised about some of the nationalities represented in that big immigration wave? (Chapter 8)

11. In what ways, if any, did the enactment of national origin quotas reflect racist attitudes? (Chapter 8)

12. How did domestic political considerations in the 1960 and 1964 elections affect the immigration debate? (Chapter 10)

13. Congress passed the 1965 Immigration Act at the same time it approved several civil rights laws. In what ways can the 1965 Act itself be seen as a civil rights law? (Chapters 8, 10)
14. How did Congressman Michael Feighan change the original version of the immigration reform proposal, and how has that change affected the character of immigration to this day? (Chapter 10)
15. The author writes, “None of the people involved in the 1965 reform of US immigration policy understood what they were doing.” Explain that statement. (Chapter 11)
16. Experts say immigration to the United States is driven both by “push” factors in the home country and “pull” factors here in America. What do these terms mean? (Chapters 1–4, 11)
17. The Princeton University sociologist Douglas Massey highlights two important ways the post-1965 immigrant influx differed from earlier immigration flows. Please explain. (Chapter 11)
18. What tensions between African Americans on one side and Latino and Asian immigrants on the other side became apparent as a result of the 1992 riots in Los Angeles? (Chapters 12–13)
19. How and where did tensions between African Americans and immigrant groups play out in the Washington DC metropolitan area? (Chapters 12–13)

20. It was in America, a predominantly Judeo-Christian nation, that Libyan immigrant Esam Omeish became committed to Islam. The experience actually strengthened his American identity and contributed to his patriotism. In what ways is America uniquely a place where immigrants like Omeish can explore their own religious traditions? (Chapters 14, 21)
21. What challenges did the immigrant influx in Fairfax County present to local authorities in terms of governance, law enforcement, and schooling? (Chapters 15, 18)
22. Korean immigrants in general are far more likely to be engaged in self-employment activities in general and operate dry cleaning shops and convenience stores in particular. Why is this? (Chapter 16)
23. The modern organized movement to restrict immigration grew out of the environmental movement. What is the connection between these two causes? (Chapter 17)
24. One issue raised by the influx of non-European immigrants in the post-1965 period was that the newcomers would not embrace America's Anglo-Protestant culture and political values and thus not make good Americans. Was this implicitly a racist argument or not? (Chapter 17)
25. How did the experience of Muslim Americans in Fairfax County change after 9/11? (Chapter 18)

26. What did Álvaro Alarcón, Fasih Khan, and Ho-Kwon Chun have in common? (Chapter 19)
27. As a social worker and counselor, Álvaro Alarcón was able to identify some of the typical factors that explained problems encountered by immigrant youth. What were they? (Chapter 19)
28. The Asian and Muslim and Hispanic communities in northern Virginia mostly rallied around Democratic candidates. But one election consultant warned that Democratic leaders should not take the immigrant vote for granted, because it could go to a different party in the future. What was his reasoning? (Chapter 20)
29. The national motto for the United States is *E pluribus unum*, normally translated as “out of many, one.” The liberal historian Arthur Schlesinger in 1994 wrote that the danger of excessive praise for diversity in the United States is that it “belittles *unum* and glorifies *pluribus*.” What did he mean by that? Do you think it was a valid concern? (Chapter 21)
30. The Keam/Seong family, the Alarcón family, the Omeish family, and Marta Quintanilla all had their own ideas of what America stood for. What do you think America represented to each of them? (Chapters 7, 12, 14, 16, 19–21)