

# Welcome to Vermont

## Background

In 2009, about 620,000 people lived in Vermont. But not all of the people who lived in our state were born here. Many people who moved to Vermont in recent years have come from other parts of the United States. But the number of immigrants from other countries has been growing. Between 2000 and 2009, 73% percent of Vermont's population growth was due to the arrival of ethnic or racial minorities. In 2010, the Burlington School District included students from 27 foreign countries who spoke 47 different languages.

New immigrants come to Vermont for a variety of reasons. Some, such as Mexican laborers who work on Vermont dairy farms, come in search of economic opportunity. Others have come as refugees from politically oppressive governments such as the former Soviet Union. Wars in nations such as Bosnia, Sudan, and Somalia have pushed refugees out, and some have found new homes in Vermont.

When immigrants come to Vermont, they bring more than their families and their physical possessions. They also bring a cultural heritage that includes customs, clothing, food, music, art, and religion. Immigrant life can be a challenge, as new arrivals work to adjust to cultural and climatic differences. They may even face prejudice. To help make this adjustment, immigrants often make connections with other people from their home countries. Vermonters, both volunteers and representatives of governments, schools, and other organizations, work hard to make these new immigrants feel at home. One of the most critical resources for many refugees in our states is the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program. Located in Colchester, Vermont, it provides a broad range of support, including interpretation, translation, and job search services to refugee immigrants.

## About This Segment

Welcome to Vermont, by Essex, Vermont filmmaker Mira Niagolova, tells the stories of a number of new immigrants to our state. They share the stories of how and why they came to Vermont, the challenges they have faced since their arrival, the rewards of their new lives, and how their ways of life have both changed and remained the same.



An extended Bantu family who immigrated to the Burlington area from war-torn Somalia around 2004.

**Note to Teachers:** You may wish to point out to students that some people in the film have accents that may make them somewhat difficult to understand. For that reason, they should listen with special care. You may also wish to have students talk about the challenges of acquiring a new language, and how even after proficiency is acquired, accents often linger. If you wish, you can ask students to let you know if there is a part they cannot understand, so you can play it again.

## Before Viewing

- What does it mean to be an immigrant?
- Why might immigrants choose to come to Vermont?
- What challenges might new immigrants to Vermont face?

## Vocabulary

**immigrant:** a person who moves into one country from another country

**refugee:** a person who moves to a new place because of war, natural disaster, or unfair treatment in his or her home country

## After Viewing

- What challenges did the immigrants in the movie face?
- For these immigrants, what are the benefits of living in Vermont?
- Why do immigrants hold on to their cultural traditions?

## Grades 4–5

**Prepare a Community or Neighborhood Welcome Guide** A new immigrant to your community would face a lot of challenges. You can make life easier for a new immigrant and his or her family by preparing a community welcome guide. Before making your guide, think about the things a new resident of your community might need to know, such as where to buy food and other necessities and who they might need to contact in case of an illness or other emergency. Don't forget to include information about your school and other community resources such as the library and recreation areas. You might also include a map of your community and a timeline of its history. Be sure to choose a format for your guide that you think will work best for new immigrants.

### Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations

Initiate an inquiry (3-4:1; 5-6:1); Develop a hypothesis (3-4:2; 5-6:2); Design research (3-4:3; 5-6:3); Conduct research (3-4:4; 5-6:4); Develop reasonable supporting explanations (3-4:5; 5-6:5); Interpret geography/solve geographic problems (3-4:11; 7-8:11)

**Highlight an Immigrant Culture** What foreign countries are represented by the residents of your community? Choose one of these nations, then do some research to find out more about it. Create a poster, slide show, or other presentation that shares some facts and general information about the country. Include a map and cultural information such as the languages spoken in the country, as well as political and economic information, such as the country's type of government and its major industries. You might also include some recent news headlines from the country as a part of your presentation.

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**Interview a New Vermont Resident** Find someone who has moved to Vermont from another state or country. Invite them to your classroom for a video interview. To prepare for the interview, write some good questions. You'll want to find out why the person came to Vermont, what they expected before they got here, how things in Vermont are different from what they expected, what challenges they have faced, what has helped them adjust to living here, and what they like about living here. Be sure to start the interview by asking your guest to tell you some things they would like you to know about where they are from. After you have recorded your video, edit it into a short film and share it with your classmates.

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**Diary of an Immigrant** Pretend you are a new immigrant coming to live in Vermont from another country in the present day. Write diary entries about your journey from your home country and your new life in Vermont. Write about what you'll miss about your home country, what your hopes and fears are about your life in Vermont, and what challenges you face on your arrival. Be sure to cover the similarities and differences between your two homes. When you have written your diary entries share them with your classmates in a classroom reading.

*Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

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Grades 6–8

**A Cultural Survey** How many different nations, languages, and cultures are represented in your school? Gather information by sending letters and response forms with questions home with students. In the letter, explain the purpose of your project and invite them to participate. On the response form, include questions about where people were born, when they or their ancestors came to Vermont, and where they came from. You might also ask people to comment on how their culture has influenced life in Vermont. Present your findings in the format of your choice. Consider using charts or graphs to represent some of your data.

*Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Initiate an inquiry (5-6:1; 7-8:1); Design research (5-6:3; 7-8:3); Conduct research (5-6:4; 7-8:4); Develop reasonable supporting explanations (5-6:5; 7-8:5); Communicate findings (5-6:7; 7-8:7); Connect past with present (5-6:8; 7-8:8); Understand how cultures change (5-6:13; 7-8:13)

**A Multicultural Celebration** Vermont is made up of many cultures. Why not celebrate them by holding a multicultural celebration at your school? First, do a survey to find some of the cultures represented in your community or Vermont as a whole. Then invite people from those cultures to help you plan—they can include classmates, parents, and friends. You can hold your event in the evening, and invite people to come and share in food, music, dress, and other traditions from Vermont's multicultural heritage.

*Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Initiate an inquiry (5-6:1; 7-8:1); Design research (5-6:3; 7-8:3); Conduct research (5-6:4; 7-8:4); Understand how cultures change (5-6:13; 7-8:13)

Grades 9–12

**The Price of War** People from Bosnia, Sudan, Somalia, and other areas have come to Vermont because brutal wars have torn their countries apart. Do research to find out about the conflicts in one of these war-torn nations. Then create a podcast, informational essay, Web site, or other response that shares this information with your classmates. Include information about how the conflict started, its impact on people, its current status, and how people are working to repair the damage of war. Also include information on refugees from that country – how they got out, where they went, and how many people were affected.

*Vermont History and Social Sciences Grade Expectations*

Initiate an inquiry (9-10:1; 11-12:1); Design research (9-10:3; 11-12:3); Conduct research (9-10:4; 11-12:4); Communicate findings (9-10:7; 11-12:7); Connect past with present (9-10:8; 11-12:8); Understand how humans interpret history (9-10:9;



Folk dancers Bosnian Lillies, mostly from Burlington, at a performance in Barre, VT.

11-12:9); Understand how cultures change (9-10:13; 11-12:13); Understand various forms of government (9-10: 15; 11-12:15); Understand issues of human interdependence (9-10: 16; 11-12:16); Understand how access affects justice, reward, and power (9-10:17; 11-12:17)

**The Changing Face of America**

If one thing has always been true in America, it is that the arrival of new immigrants constantly changes our culture. Do a survey to find out trends in immigration over the last few decades. Include information about changes in our country's ethnic makeup, and how this has influenced American culture and commerce. Share your findings in the form of a report that includes graphs and images that show the changing face of America.

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**A Multilingual Guide** Students who are working to learn English language skills may have difficulty acquiring some basic information about your school. To help these students, create a multilingual guidebook. Start out by creating a guide in English, or use an existing one. Be sure it includes basic information about your school, such as schedules, bus routes, after school activities, and what to do in case of fire or medical emergencies. Ask students who are new to the school what was confusing to them at first. Seek out resources in your community to translate the guide into as many languages as you can. Lay out the final document using graphic design software and add imagery to make the guide appealing. Make copies of

your guide available to new students who are learning English.

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**Career Corner: Caterer**

Film crews work hard—and everybody gets hungry. That's when the caterer comes in. Caterers prepare the meals that feed everyone on the set—from actors and directors to prop managers and makeup artists. If you have a flair for food, you might be interested in this job. What's the best way to get started? Start cooking on your own! Browse some cookbooks, or ask friends or family members to give you some simple recipes. And don't forget, every culture has great recipes that are just waiting to be tried.

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**Links**

*Filmmaker Mira Niagolova's Web site:* [miraniagolova.com](http://miraniagolova.com)

*Vermont Quick Facts from the US Census Bureau:* [quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/50000.html](http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/50000.html)

*Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program:*

[uscri.refugees.org/site/PageNavigator/Vermont/vermonthome](http://uscri.refugees.org/site/PageNavigator/Vermont/vermonthome)