

Summary Description

This is the fourth in a series of eleven lessons that introduces the student to European American history.

Learning Objectives

To have the student learn a few key facts about Italian American history and culture.

Approximate Time for Lesson

50 minutes

Suggested Maturity Level for Instruction

Student should be able to read simple words and perform simple addition and subtraction. Also, student should be able to sit still and engage in one-on-one conversation.

References:

"Italian Americans", George Pozzetta, Multicultural America -
<http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Ha-La/Italian-Americans.html>

"Italian", Immigration - <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/immig/italian.html>

"Amerigo Vespucci", Matt Rosenberg, About.com -
<http://geography.about.com/cs/historicalgeog/a/amerigo.htm>

Materials Needed

1. Internet Access - Pull up the following:
 - a. World Map (go to <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/atlas/index.html?Parent=world&Mode=d&SubMode=w>)
 - b. Europe Map (go to <http://www.sitesatlas.com/Maps/Maps/Europe.htm>)
 - c. United States Map (go to <http://maps.google.com/maps>)
 - d. Picture of Christopher Columbus (go to http://www.famouspeople.com/famous_biographies/Christopher_Columbus.htm)
 - e. Picture of boys selling bread (go to <http://pro.corbis.com/search/Enlargement.aspx?CID=isg&mediauid=%7BF6A676B4D-9C90-43A2-A6CB-DFFC0CDEFA74D%7D>)
 - f. Picture of Italians in New York City neighborhood (go to [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/i?ammem/detr:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(det+4a31829\)\):displayType=1:m856sd=det:m856sf=4a31829](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/i?ammem/detr:@field(NUMBER+@band(det+4a31829)):displayType=1:m856sd=det:m856sf=4a31829))
2. Something safe for kids around the house that the Student know nothing about (this could be any household item that the Student is not familiar with such as a small meat tenderizer or a

cork screw - or, it can be a household tool such as a level - the key is, the Student should not know what the item is)

Preparation

Make sure you have materials open, printed and/or available prior to beginning the lesson.

Script

Introduction (5 minutes)

1. Teacher: Last week, we learned about the English Americans and what a tough life time had starting out in Jamestown, the first town in the United States created by the English people. Today, we will learn about the Italian Americans. The Italian Americans come from the country of Italy [[point to Italy on the Europe Map](#)]. Hey, you know how to easily find Italy on the map? It's the only country that looks like a...what? [[Engage the Student in conversation but come to the point that Italy is the only country that looks like a boot](#)].
2. Teacher: That's right. Italy is the country that looks like a boot. Italy was once a powerful country. In fact, Christopher Columbus, one of the first who sailed to North America, was from Italy. Here is a picture of Christopher Columbus. [[Show Student picture of Christopher Columbus](#)].
3. Teacher: So are you ready to learn about the Italian Americans? [[Get positive response from Student and begin lesson](#)].

Lesson (40 minutes)

1. Teacher: Now, as I said before, Italy was once a powerful country and the Italians were one of the first Europeans to land in the United States. This first group of Italians came to the United States to claim land for Italy and most of them ended up in the state of Louisiana [[point to Louisiana on the United States Map](#)], the same place that many of the French lived.
2. Teacher: And after that time, not many Italians came over to the United States. But then a giant group of Italians started to move to the United States. Why? Because it was hard to make enough money to provide food and clothes for families. Also, there was a new way of running the country that made some Italians think that this new way would hurt them in some way.
3. Teacher: And times must have been pretty hard for these Italians, because no one, other than the Germans and the Irish (remember them?), had as much people come over to the United States from any European country. That's right - Italy was third in sending the most people from a European country to the United States, the first being Germany and second being Ireland.
4. Teacher: So, do you think that most of the Italians that moved to the United States were rich or poor? [[Engage the Student in conversation but come to the point that most of the Italians were poor and moved to the United States to seek better opportunities. The richer better off Italians didn't have an incentive to move](#)].

5. Teacher: That's right, most Italians that moved to the United States were poor and were looking for any kind of work to do to make money for their families. Most of them moved to New York, where they moved into neighborhoods and made them like their own villages back in Italy. And something different from the other Europeans that came to the United States was that most Italians that landed in New York stayed in New York while most of the other Europeans, when they first came to New York, moved to other places in the country. A lot of these Italian Americans would work long hours for little money (but still more than what they could have made in Italy) and send some of that money back to Italy to their families.
6. Teacher: And everyone in those days, including children, was expected to work in the Italian American family. Here's a picture of some boys selling bread in their neighborhood. How old do you think they are? [\[Show the picture of boys selling bread and engage the Student in conversation\]](#).
7. Teacher: And here's a picture of an Italian neighborhood in New York City. Notice that there are no cars because cars were not invented back then. [\[Show Student picture of Italians in New York City\]](#).
8. Teacher: In fact, the new Italian Americans started to take jobs away from other Americans like the Irish Americans. And soon, Americans started to not like the Italian Americans, saying that the Americans that came from Northern Europe [\[point to Northern Europe on the Europe Map\]](#) were better than the Italian Americans, who came from Southern Europe, for no reason other than where in Europe the Italians came from. Do you think this is fair? [\[Engage the Student in conversation\]](#).
9. Teacher: And the bad feelings toward the Italian Americans got so bad that one day in Louisiana in a city called New Orleans, the boss of the police was killed and the mayor blamed the Italian Americans. Because of this, nineteen Italian Americans went to jail. While they were in jail, a big group of Americans broke into jail and killed eleven of the Italian Americans, even though nobody could say for sure that these Italian Americans were the ones that killed the boss of the police.
10. Teacher: But even though these first Italian Americans had it tough, as time went by, the children of the first Italian Americans and even the children of those children were eventually accepted into the American way of life. And now, Italian Americans, who are the fourth largest group of people in the United States, work in every part of American life.
11. Teacher: Well, the Italian Americans brought over some great ways of Italian life over to the United States. Do you like pizza, spaghetti, lasagna, and pasta? These are all foods brought over from Italian Americans.

12. Teacher: Have you heard of bank called the Bank of America? It's one of the biggest banks in the world and was started here in the United States by a man named A.P. Giannini, who was an Italian American. Also, an Italian American scientist named Enrico Fermi was the first in the world to invent the first nuclear bomb, the world's deadliest weapon.
13. Teacher: In sports, Joe DiMaggio, an Italian American baseball player, was voted the Greatest Living Player in baseball.
14. Teacher: And as for famous Italian American actors, there is Ray Romano, who played the voice of Manny the Mammoth in the Ice Age movies. Also, there is Janeane Garofalo, who played the voice of Collette Tatou, the girlfriend of Linguini, in the movie, Ratatouille.
15. Teacher: Just one last thing about the Italian Americans – do you know where the word "America" comes from? If you guessed it came from an Italian name, you're right. In fact, the word "America" came from an Italian man named "Amerigo Vespucci". Can you hear the similarity between "Amerigo" and "America"? [[Engage the Student in conversation](#)].
16. Teacher: Amerigo Vespucci was an Italian explorer who sailed to South America first [[point to west coast South America on the World Map](#)], then eventually made his way up to the United States. When the cartographers (a cartographer is someone who draws maps) needed a name for the new land that Amerigo found, they named it "America" after Amerigo's first name. Now Columbus actually landed first in America and maybe America should have been named "Columbia" or something. But since more people knew about Amerigo's journey than Columbus' journey, well, the cartographers went with what they knew and so, the name "America" was given to these big continents now called North America and South America [[point to North America and South America on the World Map](#)].
17. Teacher: Ok – time for an activity. We've talked about some great Italian explorers that discovered America. Now, you're going to get to feel a little bit like how it was when they discovered new stuff in a new land. [[Showing new item to Student](#)] Take this and spend a little time holding it and looking at it, then when you're ready you will explain what you think this item is used for and you will give it a name. Ready? Begin. [[Have the Student complete the exercise, then tell Student what the name of the item is and what it is used for](#)].
18. Teacher: That was great! So, how does it feel to be an explorer? OK – time for review. Get in front of the class. [[Have the Student stand in front of you \(consider inviting other members of the family also to set the stage\) and ask her the following](#):
 - a. Which Italian is famous for first discovering America? Christopher Columbus

- b. Why did the Italian Americans come to the United States? Mostly, to make money and provide for their families. Also, to escape changes going on with the new way that their home country was being run.
- c. Why did the other Americans not like the Italian Americans when they first came over to the United States? Because the Italian American were taking over jobs for less money
- d. What is Italian Amerigo Vespucci famous for? His first name was used to name North and South America

Teacher reviews any questions that the Student missed].

Wrap Up (5 minutes)

Teacher: [Clapping] You did GREAT! Wonderful job! Are there any questions that you have regarding the Italian Americans? [Engage in conversation with the Student and resolve further questions by researching the Internet].