

# Angelo's Saturdays

## Lesson 2: Historical Heads

### Focus Questions

What life and work opportunities did immigrants find in Chicago in the 1890s? How were opportunities similar or different for immigrant children? What various factors in life can affect people's decision-making?

### Core Understandings

Students will understand that 1890s Chicago offered immigrants both opportunities and challenges. They will understand the interrelationship between immigrants on the Near West Side and the wealthy business titans of Prairie Avenue. They will understand that individuals should examine their aspirations and limitations (as well as other people's) in order to make good decisions about the future.

### Knowledge

Students will know the interdependence of the Near West Side and Prairie Avenue neighborhoods of Chicago in the late 19th century. They will know the opportunities and limitations encountered by immigrant children of the era.

### Skills

Students will use their analytical skills to identify obstacles to advancement that might impact an immigrant. They will use their language arts skills to summarize their interpretations in writing.

### Common Core ELA Standards

CCSS.R.1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.R.3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.SL.4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

### ISBE Social Science Standards

Goal 15: Understand economic systems, with an emphasis on the US.

Goal 16: Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the US, and other nations.

Goal 17: Understand world geography and the effects of geography on society, with an emphasis on the United States.

Goal 18: Understand social systems, with an emphasis on the US.

### In This Lesson

This lesson uses the "historical head" conceptual framework derived from the work of James Percoco to explore the thoughts and feelings of the characters in *Angelo's Saturdays*. The story elements of setting, character, and obstacles/problems are addressed. This lesson was researched and written by Aggie Nowak.



## Activity

Begin by conducting a class discussion to review what students learned about 1890s Chicago and Angelo's homeland during Lesson 1. On sheets of easel-board paper or the chalkboard, brainstorm three lists of key information about life on the Near West Side, on Prairie Avenue, and in Vallelunga, Italy. Have volunteers share their images of Vallelunga from the Lesson 1 Home Connection.

Next, highlight the interrelationship between the Near West Side and Prairie Avenue. For instance, the wealthy often employed the new immigrants in their factories or other businesses, or they benefited from their labor in other ways (e.g. Marshall Field probably stocked clothing that was made by tailors on the Near West Side).

Lead a brief discussion about what someone such as Angelo would have to do to own a home on Prairie Avenue. Discuss the obstacles that might present themselves, based on students' knowledge and story events. If you have immigrants in your class, be sure to draw on their experiences to make the discussion more relevant. Also tell students that about half of Italian immigrants to Chicago in the late 19th century returned to Italy, making this a viable alternative for Angelo.

Next, divide the class into five groups and give each a blank "historical head" representing one of the story's five major characters: grandfather, mother, father, Vito, and Angelo. Blank heads should be drawn in profile using a heavy black marker on full-sized easel board sheets. (Examples are included at the end of the lesson.) Instruct students to fill in the head with the various ideas, hopes, and dreams of the character, especially in regard to what Angelo should do with his future. Both words and pictures are acceptable to use. Encourage students to reference the story as much as possible and suggest that they quote directly from the story as needed.

### Lesson 2 Home Connection

Have students write a brief explanation of their character's viewpoint as generated by the exercise. They should be prepared to present their writing in class the following day.

## Materials & Resources

- Easel-board paper
- Markers

## Instructional Notes

*Angelo's Saturdays* becomes particularly relevant if you have an immigrant student population. If you do, take the time to explore how the issues in the story relate to today's times. Many of my students have to work (sometimes full-time) in addition to going to school, and some have dropped out to support their families. Others return to their homeland rather than stay in America. During discussion, I tie these aspects of the story to my students' lives as recent immigrants wherever possible, and I ask them to share examples from their own family history that relate to what Angelo and his family experienced. There is a level of universality to the immigrant experience that warrants deeper exploration, especially with the rich oral-history resources available at a school with a large number of immigrant students.

For more information about James Percoco's "historical head" activity, see page 31 of his book *A Passion for the Past: Creative Teaching of U.S. History* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1998).

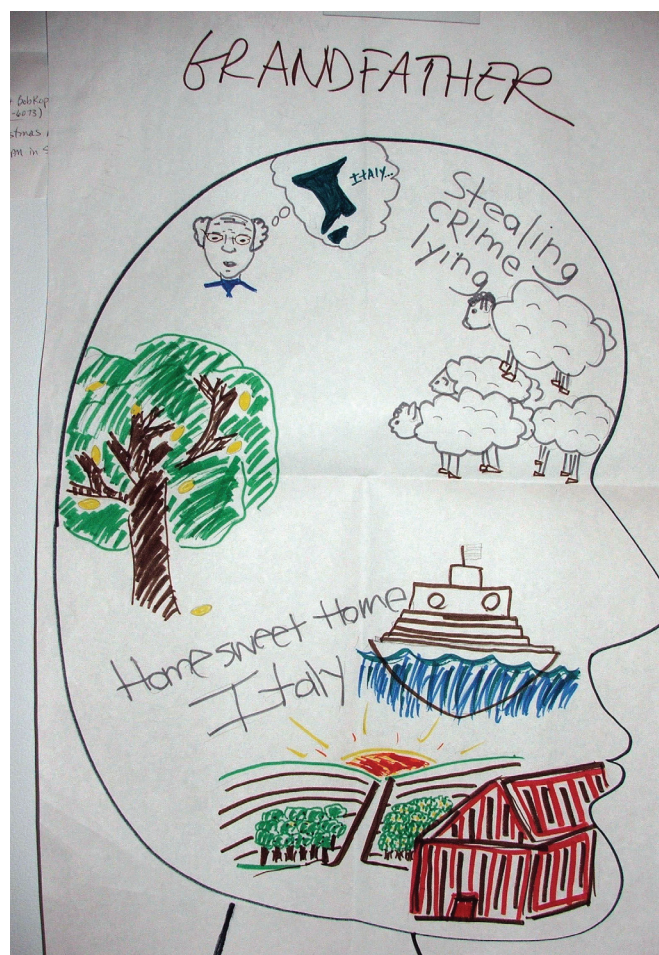
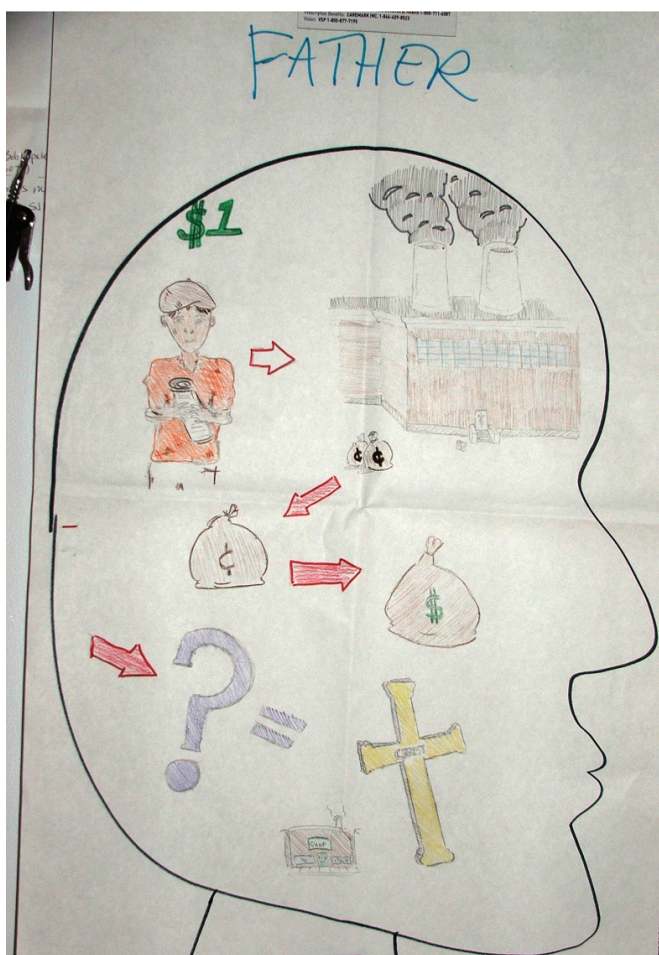
## Extension Activities

Explore how the experiences of Latino immigrants and/or African American migrants might have been similar to or different from those of Italians.

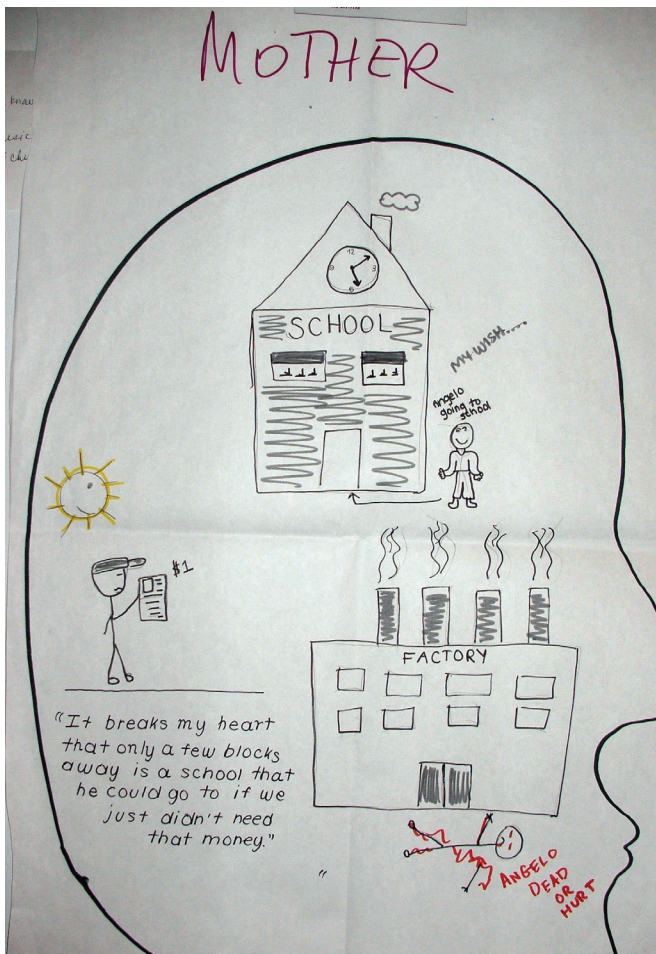
Italians were just one of many groups immigrating to Chicago in the late 19th century. Assign students to research other Eastern and Southern European ethnic groups that arrived here at that time. Have them compile their research in a chart that highlights the similarities and differences among the various immigrant experiences.

Selected poems from Carl Sandburg's *Chicago Poems* could nicely underscore the issues raised in *Angelo's Saturdays* including: "Child of the Romans" (about an Italian shovelman who keeps railroad beds level so the flowers don't shake in the vases when rich people eat lunch on the train); "They Will Say" (about little children who are forced to work rather than play in the grass); and "Onion Days" (about the troubles that befall a pregnant Italian widow). Also look at "Mill-Doors," "Halsted Street Car," and "The Shovel Man," all of which would enhance this lesson.

## Handout: Historical Heads



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