

THE VIKING INVASION: AN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN
LITERATURE AND ITS ROLE IN NORWEGIAN IMMIGRATION AND THE
FOUNDING OF *VESTERHEIMEN* WITHIN AMERICA

by

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ABSTRACT

THE VIKING INVASION: AN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN LITERATURE AND ITS ROLE IN NORWEGIAN IMMIGRATION AND THE FOUNDING OF *VESTERHEIMEN* WITHIN AMERICA

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This study examines what historians have written about Norwegian-American literature and its role in influencing Norwegian immigration to America as well as what has been written about the literature of *Vesterheimen*, and how this literature helped mold a Norwegian-American social and cultural community.

Once the pioneer immigrants had settled in America after 1825, news of America's rich bounty, as well as its pitfalls, soon traveled back to Norway in the form of Immigrant letters. These "America Letters" were very influential in drawing Norwegians to America as well as raising the education level of both immigrants and those family members left behind, and also had a role in increasing demands for a democratization of society in Norway.

After the Norwegian immigrants landed in America they were confronted with the cultural dilemma of blending their Norwegian heritage with that of their new homeland. The literature of *Vesterhimen* arose to guide this process. Such literature fell into four categories: The Norwegian-American press; Norwegian-American publishing houses and literary magazines; verse, ballads, and rural Norwegian-American reading societies; and Norwegian-American short stories and novels.

The second part of this project is a ten day unit on immigration intended for 5th-8th grade classrooms. The theme of my unit is immigrants built and continue to build America, and will start by investigating the conditions of early eighteenth century immigrant transportation via sailing ships, and then follows the travels of a group of pioneer Norwegian immigrants. The students will gain an understanding of life for these new settlers by reading a three act play, and then analyze an “America letter” written by Ole Rynning. The unit will end by shifting the focus from these early immigrants to a comparison with present day immigration demographic

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INTRODUCTION

Norwegian migration to America began in 1825, when a group of fifty-two religious dissenters left Stavanger bound for New York on the sloop *Restauration*. Between 1825 and 1866, more than 75,000 Norwegians had settled in the United States, mostly in family groups. These first immigrants quickly moved west, spreading into rural settlements in Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas. The six decades from the mid-1860s to the mid-1920s witnessed mass immigration, when over 770,000 people left Norway to start a new life in America.¹ The family groups that had predominated during the early years of immigration gave way to younger, often unmarried men and women in the later years of the mass immigration. Not all the Norwegians remained; it is estimated that of all the immigrants who left Norway after 1880, about one quarter returned home.²

Powerful push and pull factors brought the Norwegians to the United States. Roger Daniels illustrates how the desire to own tillable and affordable land pulled many Norwegians to immigrate:

“the population grew 50 percent between 1801 and 1845, when it reached 1.3 million. This created impossible conditions in Norway’s rural areas where two-thirds of the population still lived...soon an absolute majority of Norway’s rural population was landless.”³

Indeed, nowhere else on the European continent was the pressure of population on arable land as strong as in Norway. Although Norway is not one of Europe’s smaller nations – its 125,000 square miles make it slightly larger than New Mexico – only about 3 or 4 percent of its land was tillable.

¹ Odd S Lovoll, *The Promise of America: A History of the Norwegian-American People* (Oslo, 1984), 8.

² Ingrid Semmingsen, *Norway to America: A History of the Migration*, translated by Einar Haugen (Minneapolis, 1978), 120.

³ Roger Daniels, *Coming To America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York, 2002) 172

Demographic, social, and economic changes in Norway were the “push” forces of Norwegian immigration. Sporadic famine during the late 1860s, an increase in the landless class, and a surplus of labor pushed many to America. Han Norman illustrates the power of “pull” over “push” factors: “changes in American economic conditions generally led to fluctuations in immigration curves, indicating that ‘pull’ factors were a stronger influence than ‘push’ factors.”⁴

Along with the first permanent Norwegian settlement in 1834 in La Salle county Illinois, came the early seeds of *Vesterheimen*. In old Norse, the term meant “the Western World,” but in America, it meant “our Western Home.” Orm Øverland demonstrates the strength of *Vesterheimen* in Norwegian-American culture:

“the Midwest was already established as the Promised Land for Norwegian immigrants, and in the course of the nineteenth century an identifiable Norwegian America, *Vesterheimen*, with its own transitional yet distinctive culture, was ensconced in an area largely made up of Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas, with the Pacific Northwest as a far-flung subsidiary.”⁵

Vesterheimen became a common term in 1875 when American-born Rasmus B. Anderson wrote an article about it in the Chicago newspaper *Skandinaven*. Orm Øverland goes on to say that *Vesterheimen* “acquired the meaning of a specifically Norwegian America; it was used by Norwegian Americans as a fond epithet for their own vaguely defined and unstable ethnic niche within the larger, multi-ethnic Western Home.”⁶

⁴ Hans Norman, and Harald Runblom, *Transatlantic Connections: Nordic Migration to the New World after 1800* (Oslo, 1988), 112-113.

⁵ Orm Øverland, *The Western Home: A Literary History of Norwegian America*. The Norwegian American Historical Association, 1996, 5.

⁶ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 5.

This study will look at the role Norwegian-American literature played in influencing Norwegian immigration to America as well as its part in shaping *Vesterheimen*, the Norwegian-American social and cultural community. This literature falls roughly into two categories: The “America Letters” that energized and shaped the course of American immigration, and the literature of *Vesterheimen* that shaped the immigrant’s cultural assimilation in the “New World” as well as defined the culture attributes from the “Old World” that should be retained throughout the assimilation process.

The America Letters

Theodore C. Blegen writes in his 1955 book, *Land of Their Choice*, “The nineteenth century witnessed a new discovery of America. It came about, not through the daring of a new Columbus, but as a consequence of letters written by immigrants to the people of the Old World.”⁷ These shared discoveries played a major role in the migration of millions of Europeans from their homes to America. These “America letters” were especially key in luring thousands of Norwegians to the United States.

Blegen, one of the founding members of the Norwegian-American Historical Association (NAHA) in 1925, took the lead as founding editor of NAHA’s publications. He believed it was important to listen to the voice of the immigrants themselves, women as well as men, by translating and editing letters, diaries, and other primary sources. As J. R. Christianson notes, “His focus was on the ordinary and typical, rather than the extraordinary, and on the institutions created by the immigrants themselves to serve their

⁷ Thomas C. Blegen, *Land of Their Choice: The Immigrants Write Home* (St. Paul, 1955), 3

own communities – school, churches, a press and literature, colleges.”⁸ There was nothing about Vikings or colonists in this new literature; instead, it focused on the songs and poems of the common person, the influence of the ‘America letters’ and ‘America books,’ and the creation of ethnic institutions that allowed their Norwegian-American communities to flourish.

Blegen demonstrates that the realities of the “New World” were hard for the common man or woman in Norway to grasp until they began to read, “in their own homes the firsthand narratives of friends and relatives who had braved the Atlantic and had seen for themselves what America really was like.”⁹ From the point of view of the European image of America, Blegen states that the letters were instrumental in fueling a national debate in the home countries on the merits of America compared with the advantages of staying home. In Norway between the 1830s - 1850s, the debate reached into homes, through newspapers, books and pamphlets, as well as songs and ballads. The questions concerning America became of such major interest that many of the immigrants’ letters were “snatched up and published in great numbers in newspapers; preachers discoursed on the dangers of emigration; pamphlets were written to discourage prospective emigrants...”¹⁰

Famed letter writers like Gjert Gregoriussen Hovland, who immigrated in 1831, told of equality and opportunity in America and gave advice and guidance.¹¹ There were also guidebooks and personal visits by “America travelers,” returning countrymen, who

⁸ J.R. Christianson, *Nordics in America: The Future of Their Past - Myth, history, and the Norwegian-American Historical Association*, Editor: Lovoll, Odd S., (Oslo, 1993), 64.

⁹ Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 3.

¹⁰ Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 7.

¹¹ Hovland

strengthened the effects of the letters by their temporary return home.¹² Many of the “travelers” ended up leading a large number of new immigrants back to America.¹³

Blegen felt that many writers have forgotten the individual man in the

“...surging complex of international circumstances. World forces pushed people out of their accustomed environment; world forces pulled them westward with magnetic power. But the pivot of human motion is individual life. Migration was a simple individual act – a decision that led to consequences – and the ‘America letters’ were a dynamic factor – perhaps the most effective single factor, in bringing discontent to a focus and into action.”¹⁴

In Blegen’s eyes the “America letters” were important not only for the image of America they portrayed to the people of Norway, but because they fostered into action thousands of discontented people who crowded onto the outgoing ships. They are also important for their portrayal of immigrants as human beings with names, personalities, and all the characteristics of men and women living their lives during a time of struggle and change. The writings of immigrants joined happiness and sadness with dreams of what America might mean not only for their own lives, but also for those of their children, and children’s children. They also document important chapters in the image of America that stirred the people of Norway; as well as “important chapters in the social and economic history of the land of their choice, especially on its changing frontiers.”¹⁵

Orm Øverland takes a more recent look at the “America letters,” in his book, *The Western Home: A Literary History of Norwegian America* (1996). He approaches the letters from a literary angle, observing that the transatlantic migration from Norway stimulated literacy and created a new need for written communication. Within the

¹² See Ole Rynning’s *True Account of America*, in the classroom lesson plans for a detailed account.

¹³ See Johan Bojer’s book, *The Emigrants*, for an excellent fictional account of one such ‘traveler,’ Erik Foss returning to Dyrendal to lead a group of Norwegians to the Dakota Territory in search of a new start.

¹⁴ Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 7.

¹⁵ Blegen, *Land of Their Choice*, 14.

homeland, “cultural transmission of folk tales, ballads, and music as well as skills, knowledge, and ethics had traditionally been oral or by example.”¹⁶ Once resettled in the new settlements of Illinois and Wisconsin much of the traditional lore did not pertain, “new conditions required new skills, and a new freedom required new knowledge to fulfill new responsibilities.”¹⁷ The severe disruption of the old Norwegian way of life caused by immigration made letter writers out of members of a social class unfamiliar with pen and paper.

In reviewing many of the America letters, Øverland outlines the major concerns of the immigrant writers as well as their audience in Norway in regards to comparing Norwegian-American culture: education; integration vs. segregation; success in the new world vs. longing for friends and places in the old; American freedoms vs. Norwegian restrictions; social equality vs. class society; westward migration and the acquisition of land; and the importance of a Christian faith.¹⁸

Øverland also claims that many of the early immigrant letters should be regarded as pamphlets and their writers as pamphleteers. By the 1860s, there was a “shift in the content as well as the function of the ‘America letters;’ their dominant concern has become the private sphere. The earliest letters from America to Norway, however, mark the beginnings of an American literature in Norwegian.”¹⁹ Thus, these early Norwegian-American authors wrote as spokesmen for the immigration movement. The letters were distributed to the predominantly rural audience back home in two main ways: either read aloud or copied by hand and distributed, many times far beyond the intended recipient.

¹⁶ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 19.

¹⁷ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 19.

¹⁸ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 23.

¹⁹ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 19.

Some letters were published in newspapers, where they were attacked by the Lutheran Church, as they entered into the growing public debate on emigration. Øverland refers to these early letters as underground literature:

“While most representatives of authority, whether temporal or ecclesiastical, warned against emigration, the letters functioned as an underground literature which was effective precisely because it was not distributed through official channels. The writers spoke directly to the interests of their readers, who paid little attention to the strictures of better educated critics.”²⁰

Many of these letters were persuasive because they spoke with the voice of experience of common men as opposed to the warning voices of authority.

One of the most influential guide books was in 1838 by Ole Rynning: *True Account of America for the Information and Help of Peasant and Commoner*.²¹ As the son of a clergyman, Rynning was of the influential civil service class. Even though Rynning and most of his followers died of malaria just after his guide book was written, his reputation grew to superhuman proportions among his contemporaries. Øverland argues that Rynning’s writing was governed by a vision of America as a future home for the lower classes of Norway. “Indeed, one of the remarkable aspects of Rynning and his book is the extent to which he was able to see beyond his acute misery to the possibilities of America.”²² He continues to say that the nature and quality of Rynning’s *True Account* may be more clearly seen in comparison with a better known book on America of the 1830’s, *Democracy in America*, by Alexis de Tocqueville.²³

Øverland writes that Alexis de Tocqueville was in America writing from a liberal yet upper-class European perspective. With access to the mansions, both public and

²⁰ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 20.

²¹ A translated copy of this rare book can be found at the Promise of America web site at <http://nabo.nb.no/trip?_b=EMITEKST&_f=www_sub&r=635&delnr=4>

²² Øverland, *The Western Home*, 28.

²³ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 29.

private, he wrote for an educated European audience that was mildly curious about the New World. Rynning wrote from the point of view of the immigrant in a primitive pioneer cabin for a group of peasants whose interest in America was both practical and personal as they relocated to the New World. “Granting its more modest scope, Rynning’s ‘America book’ may tell us as much about how America of the 1830’s appeared to the poor immigrant as de Tocqueville’s work does about the upper-class intellectual visitor’s view.”²⁴

One of the most recent writers to look at the “America letters” is Knut Sprauten,²⁵ He argues that the educational level of Norwegians had rose considerably during the mid-nineteenth century, and the improvement of the Norwegian school system during this time resulted in greater literacy. Sprauten states “The exchange of letters therefore stimulated people to become better readers. This was to have repercussions. It was complained at the time that...people in Gudbrandsdalen and Valdres knew more about Dakota and Minnesota than they did about places in Norge.”²⁶ To Sprauten, the reason so many letters were shared by recipients was the expense of sending a letter prior to the Postal Conventions of the 1860s.²⁷ In the 1850s, it cost about half a dollar to send a letter from America to Christiania (renamed Oslo in 1925). At that time, a woman earned from one half to two dollars a week.

Many of those who wrote letters home did not do it just to keep in touch with family and friends; their main objective was to tempt others to follow them to America so they could establish their own Norwegian institutions, schools, and churches. Sprauten

²⁴ *Øverland, The Western Home*, 29.

²⁵ Knut Sprauten, *From America to Norway: Norwegian-Americans Write Home* (Oslo, 2000) 1.

²⁶ Sprauten, *From America to Norway*, 1.

²⁷ Sprauten, *From America to Norway*, 3.

claims that this would make it easier for Norwegians to make their mark in relation to other immigrant groups. Many of the letters to which he refers contained very specific information, but were often quite impersonal. Even letters addressed to close family members were often impersonal because the writer knew the letter would be shown to friends and neighbors. This helps explain the short personal remarks: “After writing page after page about weather conditions, crops, and grain prices, the writer might add, almost in the form of a short postscript: ‘Nor do I wish to conceal the fact that I got married last week. [...] She is in reasonably good health.’”²⁸

In the twenty years between 1845 and 1865, Sprauten identifies three themes in the “America letters” of special interest at home in Norway: the Gold Rush in California; the contact Norwegians had with American Indians; and the American Civil War. The discovery of gold enticed some fortune hunters to travel to the west coast, but the fear of being attacked by American Indians or the risk of having to fight in the war against their will caused others to hold back from immigrating.

Sprauten also emphasizes that the “America letters” greatly influenced demands for a democratization of society in Norway. The immigrants wrote letters to their relatives and friends in the home country stating that, as free citizens they had a say in running one of the richest nations of the world. The letters from America had political influence because they “strengthened those who stayed at home in the struggle taking place between them and Norway’s old men. The emigrant letters won many friends for America among the ‘ordinary people’ where most emigrants had their relatives.”²⁹ The contrast to Norway was great. In a letter to friends in Lillesand, Elise Wærenskjold wrote

²⁸ Sprauten, *From America to Norway*, 3.

²⁹ Sprauten, *From America to Norway*, 7.

in 1860 about the effects of living in America: “When I think about class distinctions in Norway, I cannot understand how I went along with it.”³⁰ Eventually, the majority of Norwegians back home did not go along with it either, and this slowly led to universal suffrage and a reshaping of Norwegian society.

The Literature of Vesterheimen

Once the Norwegian immigrants landed in America, they were immediately confronted with the confusion of assimilation. Gradually, the literature of *Vesterheimen* arose to guide the process and to help the Norwegians retain enough of their cultural and religious traditions while adapting to life in the United States. Such literature fell roughly into four categories: the Norwegian-American press; Norwegian-American publishing houses and literary magazines; verse, ballads, and rural Norwegian-American reading societies; and Norwegian-American short stories and novels. The influence of the literature in each category, as well as the scholarly literature of those who have examined the contributions to each category, is examined herein.

Norwegian-American Press

Pioneer editor Knud Langeland described America as, “the Land of Newspapers.”³¹ Ingrid Semmingsen calculates that between 1865 and 1914 no fewer than 565 Norwegian-American newspapers and magazines existed.³² Most were short lived and either disappeared or were absorbed by other papers, while “Others had circulations that would have been envied by the largest contemporary newspapers in

³⁰ Sprauten, *From America to Norway*, 8.

³¹ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 117.

³² Semmingsen, *Norway to America*, 138.

Norway.”³³ Many of the Norwegian immigrants were aware that Norway had already introduced freedom of the press, but the sheer magnitude of the American institution impressed the immigrants and inspired them to establish their own weekly journals, published in their own language. In *The Ethnic Press in the United States*, Arlow Andersen states, “Having imbibed of the democratic spirit in the home country, they cherished the opportunity for expression in the new land. The resulting Norwegian-American press supplied a political medium as well as a cultural tie for the 800,000 who eventually immigrated.”³⁴ Many of these immigrants had never subscribed to a newspaper in Norway but became keen readers in America.

While northern Europeans are avid readers today, this was not the case in the nineteenth century. Andersen states that prior to the politically turbulent 1880s, the press in Norway had directed itself mainly toward the social and intellectual elite. He points out that the contrast between the Old World and the new was striking. Servants, cotters, and laborers in nineteenth century Norway found newspapers too expensive and not necessary to their simple way of life. But once in America, the immigrant’s status had improved to the point where he or she subscribed to at least one of the many weekly journals carrying welcome news from the homeland and from the Norwegian settlements concentrated in the upper Midwest. Andersen goes on to say, “The newspaper, which at worst helped to seal out the winter cold on the rustic cabin wall, aided immeasurably in the transition to an understanding of American customs and institutions.”³⁵

³³ Semmingsen, *Norway to America*, 138.

³⁴ Arlow W. Anderson, *The Ethnic Press in the United States: The Norwegian-American Press*, Editor: Sally M. Miller, (New York, 1987) 1.

³⁵ Anderson, *The Ethnic Press in the United States*, 2

Norwegian journalism in America began with the printing of *Nordylset* (The Northern Light) in 1847. In Arlo Andersen's book, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand* he examines the pioneer years of the Norwegian-American press (1847-1872) and states that these early editors would have been greatly handicapped had it not been for the democratic tradition that was a natural heritage of their readers. Andersen also states, "The arbitrary transfer of Norway from Danish to Swedish rule by the terms of the Treaty of Kiel (1814) and the Norwegian declaration of independence inherent in the Eidsvold constitution of that year had re-inspired many Norwegians with hopes for political freedom."³⁶ Even though political freedom was not the primary push-pull factor for Norwegian immigration, the immigrants came with the tradition of freedom, centuries old, which Andersen believes provided the basis on which the secular immigrant press could work.

Andersen points out that developments in America during the decades immediately following 1850 were nothing short of dramatic, paralleling similar liberation movements in the whole western world. Norwegian Americans were aware of these developments abroad, as they revealed in their letters. The pioneer editors chronicled these events from abroad and interpreted American public affairs for their growing readership. As Andersen illustrates:

"They caught the spirit of manifest destiny. They looked on uneasily as nativism flaunted its colors of red, white, and blue. They witnessed sectionalism threatening the existence of the Union. They saw national unity preserved through the wholesale spilling of blood, some of it their kinsmen's. They rejoiced over the emancipation of the Negroes. They ridiculed Irish Fenianism."³⁷

³⁶ Andersen, Arlow, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand, The Norwegian-American Press and Public Affairs, 1847-1872*, (Minnesota, 1953) 8.

³⁷ Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand*, 9.

In supporting movements for moral reform and improvement of education, Andersen goes on to say that the press stimulated Norwegians to a greater interest in politics, and frequently voiced immigrant opinion as a means of informing and persuading American political leaders.

Andersen proposes that the Norwegian-American press had four main motivations for its political discussions and public affairs during the first twenty-five years of their existence: the “Americanization motive,”³⁸ to prepare immigrants for effective participation in American public affairs; to rid the country of Negro slavery, and push for restrictions and gradual emancipation rather than outright abolition; to defend the Norwegian element against extreme nativistic propaganda such as the Know-Nothing movement; and to encourage naturalized Norwegians to be nominated for and elected to county and state offices.

Among the newspapers operating from 1875 to 1925, Lovoll identifies “the Big Three:”³⁹ *Skandinaven* in Chicago (1866-1941), *Decorah-Posten* in Iowa (1874-1972), and *Minneapolis Tidende* (1887-1935). Lovoll states that these three became the leading journals in the Midwest, with a large circulation throughout the region. With the steady improvement of communication through the expanding rail service, the newspapers reached the most distant regions of Norwegian settlement. Because the newspapers also had subscribers in other parts of America than the Midwest, he argues that they functioned to a certain extent as national Norwegian journals.

Skandinaven, the oldest of the three papers, was sold by newsboys at the railroad station in Chicago, and was frequently the newcomers’ first contact with immigrant

³⁸ Andersen, *The Immigrant Takes His Stand*, 11.

³⁹ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 122.

newspapers. Lovoll says that it was given free of charge to newly arrived immigrants, and was an unexpected and appreciated welcome, since the immigrants had been warned against all kinds of salesmen. Johannes B. Wist, editor of the *Decorah-Posten* from 1901-1923, states that the, “*Skandinaven*’s history is in its general outline the history of the successful Norwegian pioneer in this county. The paper made progress, grew large, and changed with the times.”⁴⁰ He later goes on to credit it with being “the political paper par excellence.”⁴¹

Lovoll demonstrates that the *Skandinaven* was consistently Republican, and political candidates eagerly sought its support. “The newspaper was popular in tone, spoke for the common citizen, and was strongly critical of aristocratic tendencies. The publishers had themselves come from modest circumstances and easily identified with the position of the immigrant.”⁴² Agnes Larson concludes in Lovoll’s book that “the *Skandinaven* undoubtedly played an important role in making the transition to American ways easier for the immigrants, politically as well as socially.”⁴³

Decorah-Posten first appeared in Decorah, Iowa, in 1874. Lovoll claims that the newspaper’s major appeal was perhaps its firmness in form and content and its traditional and familiar style that “never surprised the readers with disturbing headlines or discordant editorial opinions. It was in harmony with and reflected through its long life an older immigrant tradition: the newspaper entertained, gave advice, and reported news from the old land and the new.”⁴⁴ The paper had a faithful readership from coast to coast in America, and also in Norway. It was the only immigrant newspaper to have a cartoon

⁴⁰ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 122.

⁴¹ Andersen, *The Ethnic Press in the United States*, 4.

⁴² Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 122.

⁴³ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 122.

⁴⁴ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 123.

series, “Han Ola og han Per,” created by Minnesota farmer, Peter J. Rosendahl. Lovoll shares that from 1918 to 1943, Rosendahl entertained the readers with more than 700 contributions. He also says that Rosendahl’s “characters are genuine Norwegian-American types who amuse by poking fun at the immigrant’s own peculiarities.”⁴⁵

Joan Naglestad Buckley writes in *The Humor of Han Ola og han Per*, that the comic strip was one of the *Decorah-Posten*’s most popular features, and that the family nature of the comic strip during the first years was in keeping with the tradition of Norwegian-American immigrant literature, “to depict the immigrant in relation to his family – for the main motive for the Norwegian immigrant was a better life not just for himself but for his whole family.”⁴⁶ She continues to say that the amusing characters became so familiar to many Norwegian-American families that they literally counted Ola and Per as family members, with many displaying enlarged drawings of them in living room photo galleries. Buckley states that the historic value of the comic strip lies in the revelation of the way the Norwegian-American immigrant community thought and lived, giving four themes of Norwegian immigrant folklife that she feels the comic strip depicted.

“1) The pains and tensions for the immigrant who wants to retain his ethnic identity at the same time that he is adjusting to American life with its constant changes. 2) The disruptive effect of gadgets and machines and the absurd pretentiousness of automated life. 3) The confusion of the human condition, or the world as nonsensical. 4) The demonstration that the human being endures even though he is foolish, weak, and undignified.”⁴⁷

As history, she feels that the comic strip depicted the tension between the immigrant’s vision of the “Promised Land” and their actual encounters with the “New World.”

⁴⁵ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 124.

⁴⁶ Joan N. Buckley, *The Humor of Han Ola og han Per*: Han Ola og han Per, editor: Rosendahl, Peter J. (Oslo, 1984) 2.

⁴⁷ Buckley, *The Humor of Han Ola og Han Per*, 3.

Andersen summarizes that the peak of newspaper publication came between 1877 and 1906 when over three hundred papers had been started. Each claimed an average life span of about ten years, while about one-third survived a year or less. In 1946, only forty were still in circulation. In the 1980s, the three Norwegian-language papers that were still in circulation included much of their material in English. When describing some economic and cultural factors that affected the foreign language press in America, Andersen states:

“The rapidly expanding automobile, radio, and movie industries played a significant part as homogenizing agents in American society. Together they promoted standardization in speech and style of living. These factors, coupled with the super patriotic postwar discouragement of the use of foreign languages...meant that the Norwegian-American press could never be the same.”⁴⁸

Andersen identified three factors that contributed to the decline of the Norwegian-American newspaper by 1925: immigration from Norway declined to a mere trickle in the late 1920s and the 1930s; each generation spoke less Norwegian; and the passing of a number of prominent personalities from the Norwegian-American journalism community by 1925.

Norwegian-American Publishing Houses and Literary Magazines

Orm Øverland points out that “the history of Norwegian-American literature is inseparable from the history of printing, publishing and distribution of newspapers, magazines and books in the Norwegian language in the United States.”⁴⁹ Øverland also states that the two main motivations for publishing were the same as for the early journal:

⁴⁸ Andersen, *The Ethnic Press in the United States*, 4.

⁴⁹ Risley, Kristin A. *Vikings of the Midwest: Place, Culture, and Ethnicity in Norwegian-American Literature, 1870-1940*, PhD Dissertation, (Ohio State University, 2003) 23.

politics and religion. “While the latter prompted the reproduction of Lutheran texts from the old country, politics was inspired by the new environment.”⁵⁰ The real growth of Norwegian-American publishing, Øverland claims, didn’t really begin until the 1870s as immigration increased after the Civil War and advertising made it possible for newspapers to reach extensive regions of Norwegian settlement. Advertisements played a key role in the growth of both publishing houses and book stores as most trade was by mail order. Øverland claims that advertisement was linked to diversity: “when Ole Monsen began to advertise his bookstore in 1861, he had titles on history some moralistic fiction, and three books by Eilert Sundt, a pioneering sociologist, in addition to the two dominant categories of religious books and school texts.”⁵¹ This diversity is illustrated by the categories Øverland identified: “Homilies and Devotional Books, School Texts and Children’s Books, History and Geography, Hymnals, Language, Handbooks, Novels and Stories, Books of Various Content and the Latest Poems.”⁵² The first category was the largest, containing about one fourth of the titles.

Øverland outlines the basic pattern for publishing and three major kinds that were established during the course of the 1860s: private publishing by the author, commercial publishing - usually in conjunction with a newspaper and a bookstore, and church-related publishing. Øverland illustrates the significance of the first type: “that so many books were published by the author was no doubt partly because they were unprofitable for commercial or church publishers, but frequently private publishing was

⁵⁰ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 47.

⁵¹ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 50.

⁵² Øverland, *The Western Home*, 50.

preferred because it offered a greater net profit. Author publishing remained important throughout the history of *Vesterheimen*.”⁵³

Øverland claims that the most important event in early publishing was the founding of *Skandinaven* in Chicago by John Anderson, Iver Lawson, and Knud Langeland in 1866: “*Skandinaven* not only became one of the most influential and successful newspapers in *Vesterheimen*, but also developed a publishing business that became the largest venture of its kind.”⁵⁴ He continues to say that books could be used to increase newspaper circulation and a newspaper could advertise a book and give it favorable review: “This combination of printing press, newspaper, journal, publishing, and bookstore proved so successful that other Chicago booksellers followed suit.”⁵⁵ He also points out that however unsuccessful the first attempts to publish original fiction and “belles lettres” were from a business point of view, *Skandinaven* and other publishers felt it was their cultural responsibility to include such titles. From 1876 forward, original fiction, poetry, and drama were regular features of Norwegian-American publishing. “Moreover, the establishment of publishers among the immigrants was a precondition for a literature: the availability of outlets for poems, essays and stories, as well as for books, was the impetus needed for literary efforts.”⁵⁶

In an undated essay, *A Little Scandinavian American Literary History*, Knud Langeland looked back on the history in which he had played such a key role and commented on the changes that had taken place during the 1870s and early 1880s,

“...in what we may call Scandinavian-American literature. Before this time the works by Scandinavian writers in America could be counted on the fingers of one

⁵³ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 51.

⁵⁴ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 56.

⁵⁵ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 57.

⁵⁶ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 63.

hand, and the books read by our compatriots ere either homilies or books like Gjest Baardsen. Because of the work of several publishers we now have a public that is able to appreciate the importance of good books and there is good reason to believe that this improved taste may gradually lead to the creation of an independent literary culture in our mother tongue in our new homeland.”⁵⁷

Even though the commercial publishers were not quite as idealistic as Langeland makes them out to be, Øverland argues that the Chicago newspaper and publisher did “perform as midwife at the birth of a Norwegian-American literature.”⁵⁸

In her 2003 doctoral dissertation, Kristen Risley continues the study of Norwegian-American publishers where Orm Øverland left off.⁵⁹ She specifically focuses on Augsburg Publish House of Minneapolis, one of what she claims are the most prestigious publishing houses to have its roots in the Norwegian-American community. Risley argues that “as the official organ of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, Augsburg wielded considerable power within the ethnic community and had the capability to reach a large audience.”⁶⁰ In one of the Augsburg Press *Bulletin* articles, they place themselves at the center of Norwegian-American culture, “...besides being the headquarters of The Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, Augsburg Publishing House may also be said to a center for Norse-American culture.”⁶¹ Risley states that Augsburg Publishing House’s role was one of a “cultural clearinghouse,” working to convince readers that they are or should become informed, educated, middle class readers of good literature, thus becoming both good Norwegian-Americans and good citizens.⁶² Risley states that the cultivation of ethnic pride was an important aspect of Augsburg’s

⁵⁷ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 66.

⁵⁸ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 66.

⁵⁹ Kristen Risley, *Vikings of the Midwest: Place, Culture, and Ethnicity in Norwegian-American Literature, 1870-1940*,

⁶⁰ Risley, *Vikings of the Midwest*, 24.

⁶¹ Risley, *Vikings of the Midwest*, 24.

⁶² Risley, *Vikings of the Midwest*, 68.

publishing agenda in the early decades of the twentieth century and that the marketing of Norwegian books, materials, and home furnishings encouraged Augsburg's patrons to maintain ties with Norway and preserve aspects of their heritage.

Norwegians in America also had their own literary magazines and illustrated monthlies. The first, *Billed-magazin* founded in 1868 in Madison, Wisconsin, was designed to instruct as well as entertain. Others like *Ved Arnen*, the literary supplement of *Decorah-posten*, and *For Hjemmet*, another Decorah publication, were particularly popular during the 1870s and 1880s. As Leola Bergen illustrates, "The distinctly Scandinavian tradition of issuing illustrated Christmas periodicals became a feature of the Norwegian American magazine world after 1910."⁶³ The outstanding one among them was *Jul i Vesterheimen* (Christmas in the Western Home).

Kristen Risley states that during the early part of the twentieth-century, when Norwegian-American literature was entering its golden age, Augsburg Publishing House introduced one of its premier publications: the Christmas annual *Jul i Vesterheimen*. "The lavishly illustrated oversized magazine, published from 1911-1957, offered a wide range of literary genres and styles, including biography, memoir, travel narrative, history, geography, fiction and poetry by Norwegian-American writers."⁶⁴ Risley feels that the arrival of *Jul i Vesterheimen* signaled a conscious move by Augsburg Publishing House toward literary texts and the cultivation of a secular Norwegian-American literature. She goes on to say,

"Jul i Vesterheimen represents a culmination in the periodical tradition of Norwegian-American publishing. Moreover, the magazine attests to the vital connection between immigrant periodicals and the development and production of immigrant literature in America, as the ethnic press played a key role in the

⁶³ Leola N. Bergen, *Americans from Norway*, (Philadelphia, 1950) 177.

⁶⁴ Risley, *Vikings of the Midwest*, 81.

dissemination of literature, the fostering of authorship, and the formation of a Norwegian-American consciousness.”⁶⁵

Risley also points out that as a group, Norwegian-Americans had reached a level of economic prosperity and social and linguistic integration that contributed to three important factors in the development of their literary activity: the rise of a professional class of Norwegian-Americans; the growth of a commitment among leaders of the ethnic community to preserve and promote Norwegian culture in America; the presence of an established ethnic audience to read and support such endeavors, particularly a middle class of readers with the time and means.

Finally, Risley says, “Jul i Vesterheimen not only attests to the key role played by ethnic publishers and periodicals in the formation and preservation of ethnic literature, but also to the importance of books and reading in establishing “culture,” in constructing identity, and in claiming citizenship.”⁶⁶ Ultimately, she says the magazine was unprecedented as a showcase for Norwegian-American culture at its high water mark and it provided a key forum for Norwegian-American literary and artistic activity.

Verse, Ballads, and Rural Norwegian-American Reading Societies

Orm Øverland argues that verse was the genre closest to the hearts of rural immigrants and most familiar to their ears through folk songs, ballads, and hymns. As soon as newspapers began to appear, immigrants tried to “express themselves in halting rhythms and faulty rhymes and sent their efforts to the editors.”⁶⁷ Such verse fell into several categories: poems in praise of the newspaper in which they appeared, poems for

⁶⁵ Risley, *Vikings of the Midwest*, 82.

⁶⁶ Risley, *Vikings of the Midwest*, 164.

⁶⁷ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 77.

political candidates, obituary poems, religious verse, and poems that focused on May 17th, Norwegian independence day. For Øverland, “the emotional and social upheavals of the immigrant experience are factors that may explain why so many people from all stations in life were moved to write poetry and try to have it published.”⁶⁸

Perhaps the most ambitious of the early poets was Nils Kolkin, whose slim volume *Winona*, is unique in the literature of Vesterheimen because it is devoted entirely to the Native American. Through a series of poems divided into four books and in a variety of meters, Kolkin told the legend of the Dakota princess Winona and narrates her story in the “conventional nineteenth-century American tradition of sentimentalizing the vanishing Indian.”⁶⁹ Even though few copies were sold, *Winona* received considerable attention in the press. Øverland hails it as the first major work of Norwegian poetry in *Vesterheimen*, saying, “had it been written in English rather than in Norwegian, it would have given the author a high status among the poets of this country.”⁷⁰

In *The Promise of America*, Odd Lovoll mentions three Norwegian poets of interest: Ludvig Lima, who published an anthology of 45 poets in 1903 called *A Selection of Norwegian-American Poetry*; Agnes Mathilde Wergeland, a teacher at the state university in Laramie, Wyoming, and the first Norwegian woman to earn a doctoral degree, was “one of the finest Norwegian-American lyric poets;” and Juluius B. Baumann, whose two collections, included intensely-felt lyrical poetry inspired by his own North Norway traditions.⁷¹ Orm Øverland in his 2000 article, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of Our Own,”* says that Wergeland did not

⁶⁸ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 78.

⁶⁹ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 82.

⁷⁰ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 83.

⁷¹ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 145.

experience a close relationship with her immigrant audience, stating, “Indeed, she was hardly a representative immigrant herself, coming to the United State in 1890 after achieving a doctorate in history at the University of Zurich.”⁷² Even though her Norwegian-American critics found much of her poetry difficult and puzzling, she was able to establish a sense of fellowship with her immigrant audience. Baumann, with his central poetic themes of love and family, the immigrant experience, and his memories of Norway became very popular with his immigrant audience.

Reimund Kvideland, writes in his article, *Emigrant Ballads – Propaganda and Nostalgia*, that immigration to America provided fertile soil for the growth of a wide variety of deeply heartfelt ballads. He says that many renowned Norwegian poets such as J. S. Welhaven, and Jonas Lie, as well as lesser known poets made great contributions:

“...but in fact the lesser and often anonymous poets were the ones who managed to saddle Pegasus for poetic inspiration. Although we rarely refer to their work as great poetry, the emigrant ballads belong to a clearly-defined historical epoch and in this sense, they are far more than worthless sentimental rhymes, or at best, historical curiosities.”⁷³

Kvideland argues that even within the confines of an often clumsy and naïve framework, these ballads still managed to touch upon the deeply human side of immigration: “Since the ballads express viewpoints and norms generally accepted by ordinary people, they often delve more deeply into the heart of the emigration problem than the poems from the bourgeoisie, which were based on the authors’ own set of values.”⁷⁴ Many of the ballads were written by ordinary rural poets who had varying skills in expressing their thoughts and feelings in words.

⁷² Orm Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of our Own”*, (Oslo, 2000) 2.

⁷³ Reimund Kvideland, *Emigrant Ballads – Propaganda and Nostalgia*, (Oslo, 1975) 1.

⁷⁴ Kvideland, *Emigrant Ballads*, 1.

To Kvideland ballads are not a distinct category: instead they embraced many subjects such as the pros and cons of immigration, departing the homeland, the long and dangerous crossing, homesickness, the disillusioned immigrant, and the immigrant who returns home to die. Other ballads might describe the immigrant who built up a home for himself through his own sweat and toil, or ones that ridiculed the idea of America as “a land of milk and honey where ready-cooked ducks fly into the mouths of the hungry, and where clumps of gold are commonplace.”⁷⁵ He continues to say that some of the ballads were written by immigrants, either for fellow immigrants or future ones, while others were the work of non-immigrants, warning against immigration.

Kvideland’s work furthers the study of ballads done by Theodore C. Blegen and Martin B Ruud in their 1936 publication, *Norwegian Emigrant Songs and Ballads*. In this book, Blegen wrote short introductions to each ballad while Ruud made the English translations. Kvideland argues that while their work was substantial, one might take exception to the over-representation of educated literary poets. He points out that “although hand-written ballad collections from the mid-1800s until the present contain important information, this material has yet to be studied thoroughly or registered in our archives.”⁷⁶

Steven J. Keillor found that reading societies met a deep cultural need within the Norwegian-American community, especially in rural areas where settlers lacked easy access to books and magazines before rural free delivery and public libraries provided that access in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁷⁷ He says, “many rural Norwegian Americans banded together to secure books and periodicals jointly – in the form of large

⁷⁵ Kvideland, *Emigrant Ballads*, 2.

⁷⁶ Kvideland, *Emigrant Ballads*, 3.

⁷⁷ Kvideland, *Emigrant Ballads*, 3.

lending libraries purchased and operated by self-governing societies of dues-paying members.”⁷⁸ He feels that the records of the reading societies are a rich and relatively untapped source of information on nineteenth-century Norwegian-American life. He goes on to say that the reading society was somewhat different from two related organizations: debating societies and lending libraries. The major difference between a lending library and a reading society was that the reading society met periodically for discussion and for self-government, whereas the lending library did not hold periodic meetings. When looking at the debating society, he states, “The essential difference was that a reading society’s activities centered on buying, owning, and lending books, whereas a debating society could conduct debates without any reference to books.”⁷⁹ Another difference was that the reading society also met the basic need for books and periodicals among the lower and lower-middle classes.

Keillor believes that the rural reading societies provide unique insights into nineteenth-century Norwegian America because they appealed to a broad segment of the Norwegian-American population, held periodic meetings where discussions and decisions were recorded in regular minutes, compiled book lists which indicated reading preferences, and, “most importantly, reflected local initiative rather than prodding from regional or national leaders.”⁸⁰ Even though many of these rural reading society records have been lost, Keillor examines the records of four former societies in Holmes City, Minnesota, Silvana, Washington, White Bear Center, Minnesota, and Glenwood, Minnesota. All these groups were located in areas heavily populated by Norwegian-

⁷⁸ Steven J. Keillor, *Rural Norwegian-American Reading Societies in the Late Nineteenth Century*, (Northfield, Minnesota, 1992), 1.

⁷⁹ Keillor, *Rural Norwegian-American Reading Societies*, 1.

⁸⁰ Keillor, *Rural Norwegian-American Reading Societies*, 2.

American immigrants and all were organizationally embedded in church-centered, Norwegian Lutheran communities. Additionally, “Unlike the parish libraries in nineteenth-century Norway, however, most of them did not have a formal connection to the local church, its governing board, or its pastor.”⁸¹

All of the rural reading societies analyzed in this study were dissolved within an eleven-year period from 1897-1908. When the rural free delivery greatly increased rural residents’ access to printed material at the turn of the twentieth-century, and when the Carnegie Libraries increased throughout this same time period, the dissolution of these reading societies was inevitable: “What is certain is that Rural Free Delivery, the late addition of parcel post service, and the construction of public libraries in the small towns all spelled the end of rural Norwegian-American reading societies.”⁸² Before their demise, these reading societies fulfilled a cultural needs of rural residents within *Vesterheimen* – as defined by them, not by the church or state.

Norwegian-American Short Stories and Novels

It was nearly fifty years after the first Norwegian immigration before the immigrants began to write short stories and novels. As Laurence M. Larson explained, “the energies of the pioneers were engaged first with the conquest of the soil and next with the building of a new social order.”⁸³ Øverland also points out,

“By the 1880s what we may call literary institutions were firmly established: books of all kinds were published, distributed, and reviewed; journals and newspapers (most weekly but some bi-weekly and even daily) brought poetry, fiction, essays, and reviews into a large number of immigrant homes; and reading societies, libraries and a variety of local and regional associations with some degree of cultural ambition had important educational functions. Those who

⁸¹ Keillor, *Rural Norwegian-American Reading Societies*, 5.

⁸² Keillor, *Rural Norwegian-American Reading Societies*, 11.

⁸³ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 141.

believed in a lasting Norwegian-American literary culture could have reason for optimism.”⁸⁴

Odd S. Lovoll illustrates how nostalgia permeated the whole of Norwegian-American literature once it emerged. “The longing for Norway – the life the immigrants had left behind – runs like a red thread through most of this writing, in verse as in prose.”⁸⁵

Lovoll argues that this yearning gave Norwegian-American literature its uniqueness and separated it from both American and Norwegian literature of the same period.

Lovoll identified Norwegian author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson as the model for immigrant writers. Many attempted to imitate his work there by creating,

“...what might be called a Norwegian-American National Romanticism. The heroes in this literature are the new Vikings, the men and women who settled in a new Normandy, and Viking symbolism is a prominent and cherished aspect. The writers were unaffected by contemporary European Naturalism. Instead they created romanticized depictions of folk life in the spirit of the Norwegian National Renaissance.”⁸⁶

Even though these authors employed Bjørnson’s proven formula, they never came close to possessing the master’s talent. Nonetheless, a few authors found an audience in the homeland. The most successful use of Bjørnson’s style was found in the novel *Husmands-Gutten* (The Cotters’ Son) by Hans A. Foss. This story of a poor but likeable Norwegian boy, relates how he is cheated by the cruel but wealthy farmer, immigrates, achieves success, and finally returns to buy the bankrupt farmer’s auctioned property and to marry his daughter. Øverland states, “Foss’s novel was addressed to those who had made the move and demonstrated that it had been a wise one.”⁸⁷ He also points out that readers in the United States found reassurance that their choice of country, despite all the

⁸⁴ Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of our Own”* 1.

⁸⁵ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 142.

⁸⁶ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 142.

⁸⁷ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 145.

heartaches, had been correct and proved that this was a country where you could reap your deserved rewards for your hard work.

Lovoll writes that no issue concerned the immigrant authors more than the temperance cause, and the American saloon intruding into almost every novel. Kristofer Janson was preoccupied with drunkenness among Norwegians and treated the subject in his literary works after he came to Minneapolis as a Unitarian minister in 1881. In three novels - *Præriens saga* (The Saga of the Prairie) in 1885, *Et arbeidsdyr* (A Beast of Burden) in 1889, and *Fra begge sider havet* (From Both Sides of the Ocean) in 1890 - Janson attacks the immigrants' drunkenness and pettiness, blaming the intolerant Lutheran clergy for the "servile position immigrant women assume."⁸⁸ Lovoll found that Janson's idealist and humanist tendencies comprised the heart of his writings. His socially critical novels became, "organs for his liberal humanism and for his faith in the social gospel."⁸⁹ It is clear to Lovoll that Janson preserved a deep feeling of the individual human being in his novels, and that he revealed an intimate understanding of American life.

Janson's wife, Drude Krog Janson, was also a Norwegian-American writer. Øverland writes that the growing women's movement in the United States had a radicalizing impact on both the Jansons and Drude Janson's first novel, *En saloonkeepers datter* (A saloonkeeper's daughter). Written in 1889, Øverland says that this book was "a remarkable response and contribution to late nineteenth-century American women's literature. As in popular sentimental fiction, the heroine is indeed led to the altar in the concluding scene, but the occasion is not her wedding but her ordination ceremony for a

⁸⁸ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 143.

⁸⁹ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 143.

life of service as a Unitarian minister.”⁹⁰ Lovoll believes that Drude Janson did not create literature of great consequence, but that her novels are interesting documents of a specific situation and historical period, and of a social debate as it affected the immigrants themselves.

Øverland states, “Such was the diversity of the early Norwegian-American literature where both the pious Ulrikka Feldtman Bruun and the scandalous Lars Andreas Stenholt vied for public attention.”⁹¹ Bruun was a temperance writer who immigrated to Chicago in 1874, where she established a mission house, a home for girls and a temperance lodge, as well as published the temperance magazine *Det Hvide Baand* (The White Ribbon). Lovoll writes that Stenholt was “The only Norwegian-American author who is purported to have made a living from his literary production.”⁹² He wrote 43 popular novels, many based on newspaper accounts of contemporary events “such as ghastly murders and violent strikes.”⁹³ One last Norwegian-American writer of note, Peer Strømme, was described by Lovoll as a sharp observer of his time and probably “the least polemic”⁹⁴ of the late nineteenth-century writers:

“For the Jansons, Norway remained the home to which they eventually returned. For Peer Olsen Strømme, home was Wisconsin. So strong, however was the pull of Vesterheimen on this native-born American that it remained his main culture of reference throughout his life. Strømme became its most popular man of letters, fondly referred to as the Norwegian-American Mark Twain.”⁹⁵

Øverland also comments that up until the time he died, Strømme was actively engaged in the building of his “new Norway” as well as confident that it would continue to thrive.

⁹⁰ Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of our Own”*, 2.

⁹¹ Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of our Own”*, 2.

⁹² Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 145.

⁹³ Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of our Own”*, 2.

⁹⁴ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 145.

⁹⁵ Øverland, *The Western Home*, 170.

But, he points out that by the time Strømme's memoirs were published, it had become clear that the "new Norway" Strømme had devoted his life to would soon become history.

Øverland points out that there were many other Norwegian-American writers during the last quarter of the nineteenth-century. He sees most of them having an idealistic motivation for their literary work such as, "a sentimental and idealized notion of what it meant to be Norwegian, a value of language and culture maintenance, or a sense of need for a spiritual or cultural awakening of their ethnic group."⁹⁶ Many were just responding to their need to write, tell stories, and to have an audience.

A new generation of writers appeared after 1900, displaying "greater literary powers" than the first generation, and concerning themselves with new aspects of the immigrant community.⁹⁷ Lovoll states that during this period, the children of the immigrants surpassed the Norwegian born generation in numbers. The literature became concerned with the question of preserving Norwegian culture and language in the coming generations. Indeed, "The picture of a large white house on a Norwegian hillside is gone; the longing and the sense of loss are no longer meaningful themes, nor is the dream of returning to Norway. Happiness and progress are to be found in America, but without renouncing the Norwegian cultural heritage."⁹⁸ Øverland claims that it is this handful of writers who appeared at the turn of the century - Simon Johnson (1874-1970), Jon Norstog (1877-1942), Johannes B. Wist (1864-1923), Waldemar Ager (1869-1941), and Ole Evert Rølvaag (1876-1931) - who best represent the scope as well as achievement of Norwegian-American literature.

⁹⁶ Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: "A Literature of our Own"*, 3.

⁹⁷ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 146.

⁹⁸ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 146.

Lovoll writes that Simon Johnson's masterful depictions of pioneer life and of the prairie environment made him known as "the prairie writer."⁹⁹ He was also a temperance advocate and a champion of Norwegian cultural values, who pushed for the preservation of ethnic traditions and culture on the plains. Lovoll feels that his 1914 book, *I et nyt rige*, (translated in 1916 as *From Fjord to Prairie*) is perhaps the best portrayal of the prairie in Norwegian-American literature. Øverland argues that Johnson's best books - *Fire fortællinger* (Four Stories), *I et nyt rige*, and *Falitten paa Braastad* (*The Bankruptcy at Braastad*) - are essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand the immigrant culture of the early twentieth-century.

According to Lovoll, Jon Norstog was "the enigma of the prairie," and "the most inaccessible of the immigrant writers, partly because he wrote in a peculiar Telemark dialect and partly because his works had an obscure character and employed symbols and allegory."¹⁰⁰ While living on the North Dakota prairie, Norstog wrote, printed, bound, and sold a total of twenty volumes of lyrics, epics, and plays. From Øverland's perspective, Norstog had a "romantic concept of himself as a prophet-poet for materialistic and opportunistic people."¹⁰¹ Of all the writers mentioned here, Øverland believes that Norstog may have had the fewest readers and his only work that achieved some popularity was *Tone*, a narrative sequence of lyrics.

Johannes Wist gave most of his working life to the newspaper *Decorah-Posten*, which he edited from 1901 until his death in 1923. Øverland writes, "While Norstog saw little reason to smile at human foibles, Wist is the outstanding humorist and satirist of

⁹⁹ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 146.

¹⁰⁰ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 147.

¹⁰¹ Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: "A Literature of our Own"*, 3.

Norwegian-American literature.”¹⁰² Øverland believes that his fiction grew out of a satirical column, *Mellemmad* (Snacks), written in *Decorah-Posten*, and culminated in his best work, “indeed one of the finest literary achievements of Norwegian-American literature,”¹⁰³ the trilogy of *Nykommerbilder* (*Immigrant Scenes*, 1920), *Hjemmet paa prærien* (*The Home on the Prairie*, 1921), and *Jonasville* (1922). Lovoll found that Wist was a spectator and satirist of human weakness: “Wist satirizes the immigrants’ efforts at Americanization, but he also touches upon the church strife of the 1880s and trivial local politics.”¹⁰⁴

To Øverland, Waldemar Ager was “an untiring crusader with prohibition and the retention of the Norwegian language in America as his two main causes.”¹⁰⁵ His first works of fiction centered on the temperance movement but he gradually became more ambitious in the stories he wrote for his own weekly newspaper, *Reform*. To Lovoll, Ager was gifted, “perhaps the most original Norwegian-American novelist besides O. E. Rølvaag. His agitation for temperance, however, at times stood in the way of his creative powers and he became didactic and moralizing.”¹⁰⁶ Ager continued to write short stories and edit *Reform* fully aware that his two main causes were doomed to failure. In 1917 Ager went against the prevailing public sentiment by publishing the novel *Paa veien til smeltepotten* (*On the Way to the Melting Pot*) as a protest against the war hysteria and its demand for one hundred percent Americanism.

To Øverland, the only Norwegian-American writer with a lasting, though perhaps modest place in American as well as Norwegian literature, was Rølvaag:

¹⁰² Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of our Own”*, 3.

¹⁰³ Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of our Own”*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 147.

¹⁰⁵ Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of our Own”*, 3.

¹⁰⁶ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 146.

“Yet an illustration of a weakness in Norwegian-American culture, however, is the fact that although he had published four novels of considerable literary quality, several textbooks for college and high-school students, and stories in journals and annuals and although he was known as an outstanding educator at St. Olaf College and was a popular speaker on the lecture circuit throughout the Midwest he was unknown outside the narrow confines of his ethnic culture. Neither in New York nor in the Norwegian capital were publishers or critics in the least aware of this person who was considered a writer of prominence within his ethnic group.”¹⁰⁷

This changed in 1927 with the publication of *Giants in the Earth*, which became an American best seller. Lovoll writes that Rølvaag shared with his fellow authors an attachment to and a love of Norway’s past and his people’s cultural heritage. Lovoll identified Rølvaag’s dominant theme: the immigrants can take part in building the American nation only by safeguarding their own traditions and cultivating their national characteristics. Lovoll’s examination of this theme in *Giants in the Earth* found that “Historians were the earliest reviewers to discover the novel’s underlying theme; they saw it as a psychological, in contrast to an economic, interpretation of the westward movement.”¹⁰⁸ Lovoll sees the success of *Giants in the Earth* as the pinnacle of Norwegian-American literature, one that was very short lived as it began to fade in the late 1920s.

Øverland claims that when immigration from Norway drastically declined in the years after the World War I, and after all immigration virtually stopped with the Quota Act of 1924, the conditions for a Norwegian-American literature ceased to exist. Indeed, “immigrant languages rarely survived beyond the second generation and an immigrant culture was dependent on a constant renewal of its unstable population.”¹⁰⁹ By the

¹⁰⁷ Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of our Own”*, 3.

¹⁰⁸ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 149.

¹⁰⁹ Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of our Own”*, 1.

beginning of the 1930s book publishing ceased and although a few newspapers survived, the history of the Norwegian-American literature had come to an end.

Conclusion

With the sudden decline in immigration from 1930 on, a Norwegian-American subculture was doomed. This subculture could only have survived by infusions of new waves of immigrants who would give life and content to organizations and institutions. Odd S. Lovoll writes, “The 1930s therefore stand as a break, a decisive generational change, where the immigrant generation passed away without their descendants taking up to any appreciable extent the work that earlier in the century had borne such rich fruit.”¹¹⁰ Ties that bound family to family became less strong. Old letter writers died, and there were fewer to keep up the traditions, because they could no longer communicate in the same language and because they had forgotten their ties.

With the need for written evidence to be preserved, and in order to inform coming generations about Norwegian people in America, the Norwegian-American Historical Association was started by a group of people convened at St. Olaf College on the one hundredth anniversary of the sloop *Restauration*'s landing. As managing editor, Theodore C. Blegen fulfilled a lifetime dream, becoming a dominate force in the new learned society. Lovoll states that the goal of the association was to collect and write the history of the immigrants, to “free it from church influence and from an exaggerated piety toward the immigrant forebears, and work at a high scholarly and artistic level.”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 210.

¹¹¹ Lovoll, *The Promise of America*, 211.

The Historical Association was headed by professional historians, and it was the first completely professional historical society founded by any immigrant group.

Blegen believed it was important to listen to the voice of the immigrants themselves, women as well as men, by translating and editing letters, diaries, and other primary sources. His focus was on the ordinary and typical, rather than the extraordinary, and on the institutions created by the immigrants themselves to serve their own communities such as the Norwegian-American press and literature. In six short years, 1926-1931¹¹², Blegen and thirty-one other scholars had created a whole new historical literature that was both scholarly and solid, and written in English. It told how ordinary men and women founded immigrant communities, and how those communities multiplied and spread. It told of their songs and poems, how they were attracted by “America letters” and “America books,” and how they created the ethnic institutions that allowed their Norwegian-American communities to flourish.

As *Vesterheimen* was losing its language and shrinking in size year by year, no new writers appeared who could continue the traditions of Johnson, Wist, Ager, and Rølvaag, the literature of the Western Home had become a closed chapter. Even though these writers were as transitional as the culture that they helped create, their work was significant in creating a record of the emotional and social life of one ethnic group as they were transformed from immigrant Europeans to integrated members of American society. This transition is at the very heart of American history. Rølvaag once said in the early days of the Norwegian-American Historical Association,

“It is vital in all cultural life to maintain a link between the present and the past. If there is anything history makes clear it is this, that when a people becomes

¹¹² Christianson, *Nordics in America: The Future of Their Past - Myth, history, and the Norwegian-American Historical Association*, 2.

interested in its past life, seeks to acquire knowledge in order better to understand itself, it always experiences an awakening of new life.”¹¹³

This transitional history will need to continue to be written today as large numbers of immigrants are entering America in totals similar to those of the great immigrant waves of the 1880s and the early 1900s. Orm Øverland concludes, “The literary history of the ‘Western Home’ of one group may thus enter into and inform our understanding of a larger American pattern.”¹¹⁴ Without the literary histories of these new western or eastern homes of immigrants, the literary and cultural of history America will remain unfinished.

¹¹³ Christianson, *Nordics in America: The Future of Their Past - Myth, history, and the Norwegian-American Historical Association*, 4.

¹¹⁴ Øverland, *An American Literature in Norwegian: “A Literature of our Own*, 380.

LESSON PLAN

Introduction

As Oscar Handlin noted, immigrants have formed the foundation of America's social, political and economic structures: "Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history."¹¹⁵ The purpose of this lesson plan is to help students understand the role immigrants played in building America and the role they continue to play in helping shape present day America.

This series of lessons is intended for use in 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade classrooms. Most of the activities are open-ended and the lessons could quite easily be adapted up or down if needed. The lessons will take place over a ten day period and will start by investigating the early stages of Norwegian immigration during the first week, shift the focus to current immigration trends in America near the end of the unit, and then conclude by looking at the current state of immigration in both California and Humboldt County.

During the content hook, the students will gain an understanding of the perilous journey immigrants endured during the mid-eighteenth century, as well as the preparation needed to immigrate, by spending time on a simulated ship's deck. On day one the students will become familiar with immigration vocabulary and then look at the "push" and "pull" factors that helped persuade the immigrants to leave their homeland.

¹¹⁵ Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*, p. 1

Day two will begin with a mapping activity that traces the route taken by a group of Norwegian settlers on their way from New York to Illinois in 1837. The leader of this group was Ole Rynning, author of one of the most influential “America Letters” – *The True Account of America*. Days two, three, and four will be spent reading a three act play titled *Our Vanguard: A Pioneer Play in Three Acts*. The play centers on this early immigrant group’s ill fated decision to settle at Beaver Creek Illinois, and the story behind the writing of Rynning’s book.

With background knowledge acquired from the reading of the play, the students will read and analyze Ole Rynning’s famous book during days five and six, presenting their findings with a brief oral presentation. At the conclusion of day six, the students will compare and analyze data samples of Norwegian immigration totals over the past 180 years.

The students will spend day seven in the computer lab, transitioning from a focus on immigration in the past to one on present day immigration trends, by visiting the United States Department of Homeland Security yearbook of immigration statistics for 2003. Day eight will bring the focus closer to home with the students analyzing the state, and county wide trend of English learners found in the California Department of Education demographic data for the year 2003-2004.

The final area of study will take place on days nine and ten when we explore the question of what can be done to help prepare and ease the transition of present day immigrants to America. Using the style of Ole Rynning in his original book, the students will be asked to write an essay titled: *“True Account of America for the Information and Help for the Newly Arrived Immigrants Written by a Middle School Student Who is*

Living in America during the year of 2005,” to be collected and assembled into a classroom book.

Prior Content Knowledge and Skills

It is important in my classroom that students have a general understanding of world geography, and a familiarization with the countries of the world. Prior to teaching this unit, I will have spent the first part of the year requiring my students to memorize countries of the world as they study for our on going bi-weekly geography quizzes.

In helping continue the fifth grade focus on American history for my sixth graders, I spend the first fifteen minutes of each day in my self-contained, sixth grade classroom with an American history mini-lesson. I read aloud a chapter a day from Joy Hakim’s series, *A History of Us*¹¹⁶, in order to help the students make a connection to what they learned in the previous year, or add to their understanding of American history. My students will also be familiar with using the United States Archives and Records Administration written document analysis worksheet, as well as having an understanding of primary documents.

In addition to prior content knowledge, there are a number of prerequisite work skills that the students will need before starting this study, for example, a fifth grade or above, reading level and writing ability, and a familiarity with data tables. As part of the writing assignment, it would be helpful if the students have previously studied essay writing as well as the structure of a play in their language arts curriculum. The student should also be familiar with navigating a computer and the internet, as well as be able to read Microsoft Excel program.

¹¹⁶ Joy Hakim, *A History of Us*, Oxford University Press.

Discussion of Content Hook

Nothing grabs the attention of students more than a road trip. Without elaborating or answering questions, tell the students early in the day that they will be going on a journey sometime after recess. This journey will take place on an imaginary sailing ship during the early days of Norwegian immigration, 1825-1860s, a time before trans-Atlantic steamships. During the morning, the teacher will need to go outside and find an area large enough to draw the outline of a sailing ship's deck. In sketching this out, use the dimensions of the 1854 ship, the *Norden*, which was 132 feet long, by 38.8 feet wide, and 19 feet deep.¹¹⁷ Rather than using a tape measure, the quickest way to do this is to approximate a three foot stride, walk off 13 strides for the base width and 44 strides for the length of the sides, and mark the outline with a chalk "x" every three strides.

Before going outside, place an overhead copy of the 1861 oil painting titled, *Emigrant Vessels from Bergen*¹¹⁸, and tell the class that we are going to be taking our imaginary journey on a ship very similar to one of these. Have the students line up as if they are waiting to board via a gangplank to the imaginary ship. Give each student a copy of the ship's rules (see Appendix C1) as they individually board, greet each student as if you, the teacher, were the captain of the vessel. Once on board, give the passengers a couple of minutes to roam the ship's boundaries, stressing that they are not to cross over the imaginary railing. After a couple of minutes, have the students sit on the ground together somewhere near the back of the ship. Share with the students that we will all be

¹¹⁷ A "ship" is a vessel of at least three square rigged masts, each composed of a lower-mast, top-mast, and topgallant mast. Each is outfitted with a yard and a full complement of square sails. Many ship rigged vessels were converted to barks to reduce the number of crew member. The web site Norway Heritage is an exceptional resource for information on the Atlantic crossing.

¹¹⁸ This painting can be found at the Promise of America web site, picture number 101, <http://www.nb.no/emigrasjon/treff_bilde.php?lang=eng&alle=?&sted=&person=&emne=&aar=&operator=&start_rad=101>

spending the next 8-12 weeks together on this ship as we leave Norway and travel to America. Tell them that we will be going back in time approximately 150-170 years ago, during the early stages of immigration to America. Also share that on this ship there are some rules that we will have to follow on our journey to America. Take turns having the students read the rules aloud one by one, discussing any questions they might have.¹¹⁹

After reading and discussing the rules, have the students stand up and move closer to the middle of the ship where the kitchen would have been located. Once they sit down again, pass out the list of provisions (see Appendix C2) to read aloud and discuss as a group, telling the students that it was their responsibility to provide everything listed. The captain was only responsible for providing adequate water and a small daily allotment of kindling for the kitchen fire. While reading the list together, have the students sway back and forth for a few minutes, simulating the rocking motions of a sea swell.¹²⁰ After discussing the list of provisions, pass out the description of the ship's kitchen (see Appendix C3), read aloud the excerpt together, pausing to mark off the approximate size of the 12 feet x 16 feet kitchen. After reading and discussing this description, take time to answer any questions the students have about this 8-12 week cross Atlantic journey upon which we are about to embark.¹²¹

Once this reading is finished and the discussion complete, the students will be ready to return to the classroom and the comfort of their chairs and the shelter of their

¹¹⁹ See Appendix B4 for background information.

¹²⁰ When I taught this lesson with my class, they had enough of the swaying simulation after about thirty seconds, let alone two minutes. I think it is important to do this activity outside and especially if it is sunny and windy. My class was becoming uncomfortable after about fifteen minutes of sitting in the mild sunshine, and the 10 mile an hour wind gusts were causing more annoyance as the student's papers were flying around. After about 10 minutes of the 45 minute lesson, my student's were wishing they had shelter.

¹²¹ During my lesson, one boy wanted to know if he could go to the bathroom, which led to an interesting discussion about hygiene aboard the ship, and the location of the ship's one or two toilets. I told them that 8 weeks was a long time to hold it.

room. Have the students take fifteen minutes to reflect on their impressions about this make believe, early nineteenth century journey to America in a journal they will be keeping during this unit. In transitioning from the hook to the lesson content, I would pose the question, “What would make these immigrants leave their country of birth, say goodbye to loved ones and family members, and risk their lives, enduring such suffering during this life changing 8-12 week ordeal to America? Tomorrow we will start to look at some of the reasons.”

Lesson Content

Start day one by taking ten to fifteen minutes to introduce some immigration vocabulary and terms. Make an overhead of Appendix B1, covering up the definitions to be revealed one at a time later. Starting with number one, write the word on the board and ask for volunteers to define the word. After the students have shared their definitions, reveal the definition on the overhead. Continue this process as you go down the list of words. Once complete, pass out a copy of the words for the students to put in their binders or folders, telling the students that any notes they successfully keep together can be used during the end of the unit test.

In segueing from my hook to the lesson content, I would next hand out Appendix 4, an excerpt written in 1908, reminiscing about a memorable 1854 Atlantic crossing.¹²² After reading aloud this harrowing account, ask the class to name some of the push and pull factors, defined above, that might have played a part in bringing immigrants to America. Next, have the students fold a piece of line paper in half, labeling one side push, and the other pull. With this chart, have the students list the different factors that pushed

¹²² H. Cock-Jensen, *An Emigrant Voyage in the Fifties*, nabo

immigrants from their homeland and those that pulled them to America, by using the four page chart produced by U.S. English Foundation Inc. titled, *Factors Affecting Immigration to the USA – The Causes and The Consequences*.¹²³ The teacher can either pass the four page chart out, letting the students individually search for these factors of immigration, or make overheads of each chart and perform the activity together as a class. To conclude day one, have the students make a second entry in their reflective immigration journal.

At the beginning of day two, explain to the class that for the next three days we are going to be reading a play about a group of fifty Norwegian immigrants who sailed over on the *Ægir*,¹²⁴ and who, after landing in New York City on the 10th of June, 1837, made their way to the Fox River Valley in Illinois. The first fifteen minutes of day two will be spent on a mapping activity. Give each student a copy of the Northeastern United States map and a copy of the Northcentral United States map from the Geography Coloring Book.¹²⁵ Since these maps are drawn to the same scale, it is possible to tape them together, overlapping at Ohio and Lake Erie, in order to give an unbroken view from New York to Illinois. Then have the students predict the course these pioneer Norwegian immigrants took to get from the New York City harbor to the Fox River Valley by using a colored marker to trace their prediction. Finally, ask for volunteers to share their routes before revealing the actual route, Ole Rynning and his followers traveled.¹²⁶ Using an overhead in front of the class, the teacher should then trace the

¹²³ This chart can be found at, <<http://www.us-english.org/foundation/research/amimmigr/>>

¹²⁴ For more information see Appendix B4, Background information for the hook and lesson content.

¹²⁵ Wynn Kapit, *The Geoprapy Coloring Book*, Longman, 2nd Edition, Menlo Park, 1999. These maps can be found on pages 7 & 10.

¹²⁶ When I did this with my class, I had one students correctly identify the actual route, most students took the shortest way, a strait line between Illinois and New York, stopping at most large cities along the way.

actual journey of these immigrants on the map: north up the Hudson River to Albany, west up the Mohawk River to Lake Oneida and then continuing west via the Erie Canal to Buffalo in a canal boat pulled by horses, where they boarded a steam ship and crossed the big lakes of Erie, St. Clair, Huron and Michigan to Chicago, where finally, they journeyed south to the Fox River by wagon train and on foot. The entire journey took about one month.

After finishing this brief fifteen minute mapping activity at the start of day two, the class will spend the rest of day two, day three, and day four reading Aileen Berger Buetow's 1930 play titled, *Our Vanguard: A Pioneer Play in Three Acts*.¹²⁷ Each of the play's three acts is about eighteen pages long and can be read aloud in a forty-five minute class session. There are thirteen characters in the cast, which allows for the teacher to assign two students per character, with the students trading off reading responsibilities every other page.

The play begins in a modern (1930) steamship line agency, where Bill and his fiancé Nona, are buying a ticket for Bill for travel to Norway, where Bill has won a scholarship to study abroad in hopes of bettering his chances of becoming an assistant professor in immigration history. Didriksen, the enthusiastic steamship agent who studies genealogy and collects book on Norwegian immigration for a hobby, shares her rare copy of Ole Rynning's *True Account of America* with Nona. In order to help Nona overcome her reluctance of letting Bill go, Didriksen shares the importance of Ole Rynning's story and its influence on Norwegian immigration.

¹²⁷ Aileen Buetow's play can be found at The Norwegian-American Historical Association's web site at <http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/publications/volume15/vol15_2.htm>

Act one starts at the Fox River settlement near Ottawa, Illinois in 1837, as a pocket of early Norwegian settlers await the arrival of Ole Rynning and most of the passengers of the *Ægir* as they end their journey from New York city. Rynning, and his group have decided to move on past the Fox River settlement and on to land near Beaver Creek in Iroquois County. This decision has left the earlier Fox River immigrants debating whether or no to join the newly arrived Norwegian immigrants, with most of the group deciding to follow Rynning and his group. Act two takes place in April of 1838, in a log house at the Beaver Creek settlement, as the settlers congregated in the house, complain about the horrible conditions at the swampy, mosquito infected, Beaver Creek settlement. A dam, built to hold back the creek, falls apart and sweeps away many of the immigrants' dwellings. This emergency sends everyone into action, with a couple of settlers getting swept away. The third act takes place four months later in the same house, as the group feels the immediacy of another harsh winter approaching. The group has suffered numerous deaths due to malarial fever from the mosquitoes of the swampy Beaver Creek, and their leader, Ole Rynning is missing. The group decides to move back to the Fox River settlement. The play ends with Rynning returning after breaking his leg upon falling through ice. He chooses not to join the others, instead staying behind to write his book, *The True Account of America*, while confined to his death bed.

In the preface to the Norwegian-American Historical Association's Volume XV, Theodore C. Blegen writes,

“In this first attempt to dramatize the chapter of Norwegian-American history with which she deals, Mrs. Buetow presents an interesting interpretation of Rynning's character and purposes, and illustrates some of the dramatic potentialities of the immigrant saga. The obvious anachronisms that she commits in achieving her goal may be checked by referring to the Association's historical account of Rynning's career. He wrote his famous book before, not after, the low

and swampy character of the Beaver Creek settlement had been disclosed. The scene at Fox River, the episode of the dam, and the love story are the author's inventions."¹²⁸

The play ends with Rynning telling Ole Nattestad, the only other settler that stayed behind with him, to never mind about his leg, telling Nattestad that he is going to write night and day until the very end, telling the true account of America for those Norwegians back home, contemplating immigration. This ending makes an ideal transition to days five and six, where the students will read Ole Rynning's book.¹²⁹

Start day five with an overhead of immigrant Gullik O. Gravdal's 1839 quote (see Appendix C5).

"Hardly any other Norwegian publication has been purchased and read with such avidity as this Rynning's *Account of America*. People traveled long distances to hear 'news' from the land of wonders, and many who before were scarcely able to read began in earnest to practice in the 'America-book,' making such progress that they were soon able to spell their way forward and acquire most of the contents. The sensation created by Ansten's return was much the same as that which one might imagine a dead man would create, were he to return to tell of the life beyond the grave. Ministers and bailiffs tried to frighten us with terrible tales about the dreadful sea monsters, and about man-eating wild animals in the new world; but when Ansten Nattestad had said Yes and Amen to Rynning's Account, all fears and doubts were removed."¹³⁰

Then discuss the significance of the quote, as well as connecting what was learned at the end of day four. Pause during the reading of the quote to show the students a striking picture of Ansten Nattestad taken during the later part of his life.¹³¹ After reading the quote, place on overhead of the front cover of one of the few original copies of Rynning's

¹²⁸ Theodore C. Blegen, preface to Volume XV of the Norwegian-American Historical Association, found at <<http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/publication/volume15/preface.htm>>

¹²⁹ My class was very motivated by the play, especially the fabricated love affair between Ole Rynning and Elisif. The play did a good job of bringing to life the historical Ole Rynning, as well as hooking them into reading his *True Account*.

¹³⁰ A letter by Hovland, dated April 22, 1835, is translated into English and published under the title "A Typical 'America Letter,'" in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 9: 68-75 (June, 1922).

¹³¹ Ansten Knudsen Nattestad's picture first appeared in, *History of the Norwegian Settlements*, by Hjalmar Rued Holand, published in 1906. It can be found at The Promise of America web site at, <http://www.nb.no/emigrasjon/emigration/2nd_pho.html>

book. Point the obvious fact that the book was written in Norwegian, and the copy that we will read together as a class has been translated.¹³² The next step is to read through the preface and the table of contents on an overhead with the entire class. Explain that the book is short, but still too long to be read in the time allotted, so we will literally be cutting each chapter out and assigning a pair of students to read it. The book is broken into thirteen chapters, with some longer than others, so the teacher will want to be aware of this when assigning chapters. Point out that each pair of students will be filling out written document analysis sheet as they read through their chapter.¹³³ Tell the class that not only will each student have to turn in an analysis sheet, each pair will also make an overhead presentation tomorrow in front of the class, giving their answers to these questions: What are three things the author said that you think are important?, What are two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written?, and If you could write a question to the author about something that was left unanswered, what would it be? The students can use the remaining time to work on the assignment.

The students will spend most of day six presenting their analysis of Rynning's book. After the students have shared their findings, explain the significance of Rynning's *True Account*, and other "America Letters" in helping start the first significant wave of Norwegian immigration.¹³⁴ Conclude day six with the response of Ole Rynning's, well-known at the time, clergyman father after hearing the news of his son's death and the tragedy which had befallen the Beaver Creek settlers. He wrote a letter in the

¹³² The image of the cover can also be found at The Promise of America web site at, <http://www.nb.no/emigrasjon/emigration/2nd_pho.html>

¹³³ Written document analysis sheets can be found at, <http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/analysis_worksheets/document.html>

¹³⁴ See Appendix B4 for background information.

Morgenbladet, a Norwegian newspaper, sharing the apparent death of his son, and concluding with a list of conditions in Norway compared to conditions in North America, in hopes of stemming the tide of immigrating Norwegians who were influenced by his son's message. Share his comparisons (Appendix C6) with the class, ending the day with discussion about what choice the students would make if they were in early nineteenth century Norway – immigrate or stay. Transition from day six to seven by telling the class that tomorrow we will see just how many Norwegians decided to leave.

Day seven will be spent in the computer lab. With the students arranged in pairs, pass out Appendix B1, Questions for Immigration Statistics, and then direct them to the United States Department of Homeland Security web site to look at their yearbook of immigration statistics for 2003.¹³⁵ Explain that today we will be making a transition from looking at Norwegian immigration to America in the mid-nineteenth century, to looking at Norwegian immigration over the past 184 years when compared with other countries. From there, we will look at United States immigration statistics from 1820-2003, especially concentrating on the recent years of 1989-2003, and finally looking at immigration statistics at the state level. Direct the students to open Table 1: Immigration to the United States: fiscal years 1820-2003, then pass out the questions contained in appendix B2, and have the students answer questions 1-3. Next have the students open Table 2: Immigration by region and selected country of last residence: fiscal years 1820-2003, and let the students answer questions 4-8, finally, have the students open Table 11: Immigrants admitted by state of intended residence: fiscal years 1988-2003, with the students completing questions 9 and 10. The teacher will move about the room lending

¹³⁵ The U.S. Department of Homeland Security can be found at <<http://uscis.gov/graphics/shared/statistics/yearbook/YrBk03Im.htm>>

assistance. Have the students keep their answers in their immigration folders to be shared and discussed tomorrow, when we take a closer look at California's immigrants as well as those in our own county of Humboldt. Conclude the day with the students writing a reflection in their on going journals.

Begin day eight by reviewing and discussing the answers to the immigration statistic questions from the day before. Next, pass out a copy of the California Department of Education's demographic data, listing the statewide English learners by language and grade for the year 2003-2004.¹³⁶ Explain that this list is a good indication of where some of our most recent young immigrants are coming from. Spend fifteen minutes looking over the list of 57 different languages, discussing any interesting facts discovered by the students. Have the students see how many of the languages are familiar, and how many of them they have heard before. Also look at the trend of the Spanish population from the totals in kindergarten to the final total in 12th grade. Have the students speculate on some of the reasons for this drastic drop in numbers.

After investigating the state wide trend of English learners, have the students predict what a break down of our own Humboldt County's list of English learners would look like. Then pass out a copy of the English learners by language and grade for Humboldt County.¹³⁷ Ask the students if these statistics match those of the state totals? Does Humboldt County have some of the same trends as the state? Our school is not very ethnically diverse, with a small population of Hmong and Hispanic students, as well as

¹³⁶ These statistics can be found at
<<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/LEPbyLang1.asp?cChoice=LepbyLang1&cYear=2003-04&cLevel=State&cTopic=LC&myTimeFrame=S&submit1=Submit>>

¹³⁷ These statistics can be found at
<<http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/LEPbyLang2.asp?cChoice=LepbyLang2&cYear=2003-04&TheCounty=12%20HUMBOLDT&cLevel=County&cTopic=LC&myTimeFrame=S&submit1=Submit>>

two Punjabi speakers. Have the students look to see if these students represented within the data set.

Before starting day nine, quickly review each day of the unit, summarizing this two week introductory journey through the topic of immigration. Next give the students the Immigrant Experience Survey¹³⁸ (See Appendix B2) to fill out individually. Once complete, have the students get in groups of three or four and share their responses, asking them to agree on an overall group rating, then share the actual rankings. After discussing the survey, tell the students that they are going to spend the next two days on a writing assignment that might help with the transition and adjustment time for the students of these newly arriving California immigrants.

In the helpful spirit and style of Ole Rynning in 1837, the students will write an essay intended to be used as a guiding resource for immigrating middle school students, titled: *“True Account of America for the Information and Help for the Newly Arrived Immigrants Written by a Middle School Student Who is Living in America during the year of 2005.”* Before giving the students time to write, review the chapter headings that Ole Rynning used in his book. Although some are not as relevant as other, have the students focus on the following topics: What is the general nature of America, what reason do so many people come here, and how should they expect to make a living? Is it true that the government is going to prohibit more people from coming? Is there fear that the land will soon be overpopulated? What is the nature of the land in California? What does good land cost? How high are wages? What kind of religion is to be found in America? Is there

¹³⁸ This survey was presented to me at an SB395 training put on by the Sonoma County Office of Education in the summer of 2004. It was produced by Kathleen Kentfield, Nancy Whisler and Judy Williams, after they surveyed 525 recently arrived immigrant families asking them to share their responses to the most difficult problems they faced while immigrating to America.

any kind of order or government in the land, or can every one do as they please? What provisions are made for the education of children, and for the care of poor people? What language is spoken in America, and is it difficult to learn? And finally, for what kind of people is it advisable to immigrate to America, and for whom is it not advisable? Give the students the remainder of day nine and all of day ten to complete the assignment. Inform them that this writing assignment will represent one third of their final grade for the unit.

Evaluation

The students will be evaluated on three aspects of their work. One third of their grade will focus on their immigration folders that they have been keeping. Complete folders will contain the following: all notes and primary documents accumulated during the unit; push-pull chart; map showing the predicted route of Ole Rynning and those who went from New York to Illinois and the actual route marked accurately; all journal entry reflections; copy of overhead presentation of student analysis of one chapter of Ole Rynning's book; answers to immigration statistics, and their ranking of problems faced during the immigrant experience. The second third of their grade will be generated by their final essay titled, "True Account of America for the Information and Help for the Newly Arrived Immigrants Written by a Middle School Student Who is Living in America during the year 2005." The final third of their grade will be their score on the final test given at the end of the unit (see Appendix B3).

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APPENDIX A

Grade Level Standards Addressed in the Lesson

APPENDIX A1

State Standards for History, Mathematics, and Language Arts

This ten day cross-curricular unit will strive to fulfill the following standards:

From the National Center for History's National History Standards:

Era 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861) Standard 2C: The student understands how antebellum immigration changed American society.

Era 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900) Standard 2A: The student understands the sources and experiences of the new immigrants.

From the California History-Social Science Content Standards: Grades Six Through Eight Historical and Social Sciences Analysis Skills:

In addition to the standards for grades six through eight, students demonstrate the following intellectual reasoning, reflection, and research skills:

Chronological and Spatial Thinking

1. Students explain how major events are related to one another in time.
2. Students construct various time lines of key events, people, and periods of the historical era they are studying.
3. Students use a variety of maps and documents to identify physical and cultural features of neighborhoods, cities, states, and countries and to explain the historical migration of people, expansion and disintegration of empires, and the growth of economic systems.

Research, Evidence, and Point of View

1. Students frame questions that can be answered by historical study and research.
2. Students distinguish fact from opinion in historical narratives and stories.
3. Students distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, essential from incidental information, and verifiable from unverifiable information in historical narratives and stories.
4. Students assess the credibility of primary and secondary sources and draw sound conclusions from them.
5. Students detect the different historical points of view on historical events and determine the context in which the historical statements were made (the questions asked, sources used, author's perspectives).

Historical Interpretation

1. Students explain the central issues and problems from the past, placing people and events in a matrix of time and place.
2. Students understand and distinguish cause, effect, sequence, and correlation in historical events, including the long-and short-term causal relations.

3. Students explain the sources of historical continuity and how the combination of ideas and events explains the emergence of new patterns.
4. Students recognize the role of chance, oversight, and error in history.
5. Students recognize that interpretations of history are subject to change as new information is uncovered.
6. Students interpret basic indicators of economic performance and conduct cost-benefit analyses of economic and political issues.

From the California English-Language Arts sixth grade standards:

1.0 Writing Strategies

Students write clear, coherent, and focused essays. The writing exhibits students' awareness of the audience and purpose. Essays contain formal introductions, supporting evidence, and conclusions. Students progress through the stages of the writing process as needed.

Organization and Focus

1.1 Choose the form of writing (e.g., personal letter, letter to the editor, review, poem, report, narrative) that best suits the intended purpose.

1.2 Create multiple-paragraph expository compositions:

- a. Engage the interest of the reader and state a clear purpose.
- b. Develop the topic with supporting details and precise verbs, nouns, and adjectives to paint a visual image in the mind of the reader.
- c. Conclude with a detailed summary linked to the purpose of the composition.

1.3 Use a variety of effective and coherent organizational patterns, including comparison and contrast; organization by categories; and arrangement by spatial order, order of importance, or climactic order.

2.0 Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

Students deliver well-organized formal presentations employing traditional rhetorical strategies (e.g., narration, exposition, persuasion, description).

2.2 Deliver informative presentations:

- a. Pose relevant questions sufficiently limited in scope to be completely and thoroughly answered.
- b. Develop the topic with facts, details, examples, and explanations from multiple authoritative sources (e.g., speakers, periodicals, online information).

2.3 Deliver oral responses to literature:

- a. Develop an interpretation exhibiting careful reading, understanding, and insight.
- b. Organize the selected interpretation around several clear ideas, premises, or images.
- c. Develop and justify the selected interpretation through sustained use of examples and textual evidence.

From the California Mathematics standards for sixth grade:

2.0 Students use data samples of a population and describe the characteristics and limitations of the samples:

2.1 Compare different samples of a population with the data from the entire population and identify a situation in which it makes sense to use a sample.

APPENDIX B

Copies of All Assignments, Quizzes, Tests, Final Evaluation Instruments, and
Background Information for Teaching the Unit

APPENDIX B1

Vocabulary and Terms That Describe Immigration

1. Immigration- the movement of people from one country to another. Most often these groups of people settle permanently in another country.
2. Immigrant-a person that leaves their homeland to settle permanently in a new country.
3. Push Factors-factors that "push" people out of their homeland and cause them to move to another country. Some examples are environmental disasters such as famines, floods, hurricanes, mudslides, and volcanic eruptions. Others include poverty and human rights abuses.
4. Pull Factors-factors that "pull" or draw people to move to another country permanently. Some examples are the search for a better life, better paying jobs and more opportunities for employment or jobs, better education, family members who already live in that country and religious freedom.
5. Ethnic Groups-Groups of people who share the same cultural values or characteristics such as the same language, food, customs, clothing, history, holidays, etc.
6. Waves of Immigration-Large groups of people often from the same country or the same ethnic group who immigrated to a new country. In the United States we faced large "waves of immigration" from Europe in the mid-1800s to the early 1900s. An example would be when millions of people left Ireland and came to the United States because of the potato famine.
7. European Immigration-Most European immigration happened before airplanes were used to carry large numbers of people. Many people left Europe and moved to the United States to settle permanently. They traveled from Europe to the United States by boat. They settled along the east coast of the United States.
8. Ancestors-people that you are related to who lived in the past and are not alive now. Many people search for their family history and identity through the names and information written about their ancestors.
9. Symbols of Immigration- There are many signs or symbols which represent or stand for immigration. When we see or hear of these symbols we automatically think of immigrants and immigration. Two of these are:
 - a. The Statue of Liberty-An enormous statue of a woman holding a torch above her head. She represents liberty and freedom and was a gift from France to the United States. Many immigrants would see the Statue of Liberty when they first arrived by boat to the United States. Today many people like to climb up inside the statue to get a view of New York City from the windows in her crown. It often takes 2-3 hours to climb from the base to the crown.
 - b. Ellis Island-An immigration processing center or port of entry where most immigrants passed through before being allowed to officially enter and settle in the United States. Ellis island is an island in the waters off New York City.

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c. New York City-used to be one of the first capitals of the United States. Many European immigrants first settled in large cities like New York City as well as other cities on the east coast of the United States.

10. Customs Office-An office that people must pass through before being allowed to enter into another country.

APPENDIX B2

Questions for Immigration Statistics

On another sheet of paper, answer the following questions.

From Table 1: Immigration to the United States: fiscal years 1820-2003

1. What were the top five decades of immigration to the United States?
2. What year had the highest total of immigrants?
3. Why do you think there was such a dramatic drop between the decade of the 1920s and the decade of the 1930s?

From Table 2: Immigration by region and selected country of last residence: fiscal years 1820-2003

4. What were the top three decades of Norwegian immigration?
5. Give a general description of the nature of Norwegian immigration over the past 184 years.
6. What five countries had the highest total of immigrants during the decade of 1881-1890?
7. What five countries had the highest total of immigrants during 2003? How are they similar or different from question 6?
8. Pick a country of your choice and give a general description of its immigration trend over the past 184 years.

From Table 11: Immigrants admitted by state of intended residence: fiscal years 1988-2003

9. Predict the top five states that you think had the highest number of immigrants in 2003, then, find the top five states and compare your results.
10. Again, predict the bottom five states with the highest number of immigrants in 2003, and then find the bottom five states and compare your results.

APPENDIX B3

The Immigrant Experience

The following are problems that have faced immigrants to the United States. Read each one carefully and rank them on a continuum from the one you feel would be the easiest (1) to surmount, to the one you would find the most difficult (10).

Rank the items individually first, then compare them with one other person.

- _____ A. Learning a new language.

- _____ B. Leaving family and friends in the homeland.

- _____ C. Feeling different and like you don't fit in.

- _____ D. Living in inadequate housing, maybe even in an unsafe neighborhood.

- _____ E. Working in minimum wage jobs or maybe having to hold several minimum wage jobs to survive.

- _____ F. Experiencing a perilous journey.

- _____ G. Living and waiting in a refugee camp.

- _____ H. Turning your children away from traditional customs and values.

- _____ I. Deciding, due to various limitations, which member of the family will emigrate first.

- _____ J. Feeling incapable and depending on others to help you with your daily business, paying bills, making doctor appointments, etc.

APPENDIX B4

Background Information for the Hook and Lesson Content

The first ships used to freight passengers were originally built for cargo. This means in reality that the passengers were placed in the cargo hold, rebuilt to carry passengers. The passengers were lodged between decks, often just called “tween-decks” or “steerage”. The students will be interested to know that the origin of the expression “steerage”, comes from steers (cattle) and could indicate that the immigrants traveled under the same conditions, and on the same deck as was used for transporting the cattle, often with very little cleaning in between. As soon as the ship had set the passengers on land, the furnishings were discarded and the ship prepared for return cargo to Europe.

The ceiling height of the between-deck was usually 6 to 8 feet. The bunks, made of rough boards, were set up along both sides of the ship and were ordinarily positioned so the passengers lay in the direction of the ship, from front to back. Each bunk was intended to hold from three to six persons, and these were often called family bunks. They usually had enough headroom between the bunks that an adult could sit up in bed. The best place to have a bunk was amidship, because the rocking of the boat was felt less there. The bunks had straw mattresses and the immigrants had to bring their own pillows, blankets, animal hides and other necessary bedclothes.

Daily life onboard consisted of various routines and duties. When weather permitted, the passengers were usually up on deck, some busy cleaning and others playing games to pass the time. Some captains were strict while others cared little about what the passengers did. Some captains encouraged all types of games and entertainment

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while others forbid such activities. The captain usually held Sunday services on deck. On ordinary weekdays, there was often dancing on deck. When a one ship came into heavy fog off the coast of Newfoundland, all the instruments on board were used to make as much sound as possible so as to be heard by other ships.¹³⁹ When Ole Rynning sailed across in 1837 on the *Ægir*, they followed a northern route in good weather that lasted over just 8 weeks. The most dramatic event was when the *Ægir*, on the 8th of May, was involved in a minor collision in mid-ocean with the British ship *Barletto*. Many of the passengers panicked, but 27-year-old student Ole Rynning soon calmed them down.¹⁴⁰ It soon became apparent that he had formidable leadership talents which the students will read about in this unit. Rynning's writings tell of the prices of tickets, which from Bergen to New York was 30 SPD and as high as 20 SPD for children. The price from New York to Illinois was 30 SPD. The Norwegian SPD (Speciedaler) was worth approximately a quarter of a US dollar at that time.¹⁴¹ Clair O. Haugen states in her article, "The Long Crossing of the Hannah Parr,"

"To indicate the real cost of a ticket: In 1868 one specie dollar exchanged for about \$1.12 US. In the US Midwest, \$1.00 was a common day's wage for a farm laborer, and a milk cow could be bought for \$25. Farm laborers in Hedmark typically earned 5 spd a year. One Hedmark crofter (Peder Monsen, Grefsheim) in the 1860's paid an annual rent of 9 spd for 8½ acres of land. Adjusted for

¹³⁹ For a detailed account of the Atlantic crossing by Norwegian immigrants see Børge Solem's recent article, "The Transatlantic Crossing," February 20, 2001. It can be found at, <http://www.norwayheritage.com/articles/templates/voyages.asp?articleid=20&zoneid=6>

¹⁴⁰ For a detailed account of the story about the pioneers, including Ole Rynning, who immigrated from Hordaland to America on the *Ægir* in 1837 and the tragedy that befell these first settlers in Illinois, read Erling Viksund's January, 2005 article, "The *Ægir* People." It can be found at, <http://www.norwayheritage.com/articles/templates/voyages.asp?articleid=95&zoneid=6>

¹⁴¹ Trond Austheim and Børge Solem's article, "Cost of Passage, Norway – America," gives a more detailed comparison of the monetary conversions of the time. It can be found at, <http://www.norwayheritage.com/articles/templates/voyages.asp?articleid=45&zoneid=6>

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inflation, the buying power in 1999 of one 1868 specie dollar would be about \$12.60 US.”¹⁴²

In addition to travel money, the immigrants also had to finance or furnish the requisite personal belongings and food. According to Ole Rynning’s description, personal belongings should at least include: bedding and linens, furs and wool clothing, wool cloth, griddle, spinning wheel, hand quern, pans, crockery, cutlery, tools and a good rifle with percussion lock. Also according to Ole Rynning’s recommendations, food for 12 weeks consisting of preserved foods such as salted pork, smoked and cured meat, salted meat, smoked and cured herring, dried fish, butter, cheese, soft whey-cheese, coffee, tea, sugar, sour milk, beer, flour, peas, grits, potatoes, rye biscuits, rusk and flatbread, some liquor, vinegar, prunes and raisins for constipation, sulphur salve and powder for vermin, Hoffman's and camphor drops, spare linen, saltwater soap and combs. Immigration in those days involved considerable planning, preparation and cost.

For most Norwegians in the nineteenth century, America remained a remote and exotic place until the first immigrants began to write home. These “American letters” that traveled from the immigrants back to former neighbors, friends, and family in the old country and freely shared with others, had a great influence on the extent and nature of nineteenth century immigration from Europe to the United States, especially in Norway. Quite a few of these early Norwegian immigrant letters were transformed into pamphlets back home and used as immigrant guides for the rural class. Many of the letters were read aloud, copied by hand, printed in newspapers, or in Ole Rynning’s case, *True Account of America for the Information and Help of Peasant and Commoner Written by a*

¹⁴² Claire O. Haugen’s article, “The Long Crossing of the Hannah Parr – Background Essay,” can be found at, <<http://www.norwayheritage.com/articles/templates/voyages.asp?articleid=30&zoneid=6>>

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Norwegian Who Arrived there in the Month of June, 1837, made into a booklet. Some letters also found their way to newspapers and entered the public debate on immigration.

During the winter of 1837, Rynning wrote his thoughts on America from his sick bed in Beaver Creek, Illinois, only eight months after landing in New York. In the spring of 1838, Ansten Nattestad, a friend of Ole Rynning, made a trip back to Norway to visit friends and relatives taking with him Rynning's writings as well as letters from nearly all the earlier Norwegian emigrants whom he had met. This trip was instrumental in disseminating information about America in Norway. Rynning recognized the need of a "trustworthy and fairly detailed account of the country," for he had learned in Norway, "how great the ignorance of the people is, and what false and preposterous reports were believed as full truth."¹⁴³

The report of Nattestad's return spread like a "wildfire through the land."¹⁴⁴ Among the lower class of Norway in the 1830s, little was known of America, and there was great eagerness to get definite information on the whole immigration process and opportunities in the new land. Gullik O. Gravdal, an immigrant of 1839 wrote,

"Hardly any other Norwegian publication has been purchased and read with such avidity as this Rynning's *Account of America*. People traveled long distances to hear 'news' from the land of wonders, and many who before were scarcely able to read began in earnest to practice in the 'America-book,' making such progress that they were soon able to spell their way forward and acquire most of the contents. The sensation created by Ansten's return was much the same as that which one might imagine a dead man would create, were he to return to tell of the life beyond the grave."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Thomas C. Blegen, "Historical Introduction to Ole Rynning's True Account of America," p. 7, <http://nabo.nb.no/trip?_b=EMITEKST&_f=www_sub&r=635&delnr=2#fotnoter>

¹⁴⁴ Thomas C. Blegen, "Historical Introduction to Ole Rynning's True Account of America," p. 8.

¹⁴⁵ Thomas C. Blegen, "Historical Introduction to Ole Rynning's True Account of America," p. 8.

APPENDIX B5

Final Quiz

Name: _____

Date: _____

On another sheet of paper, answer the following questions in complete sentences.

Define the following vocabulary words:

1. Immigration:

2. Immigrant:

3. Push Factors:

4. Pull Factors:

5. Waves of Immigration:

6. Ancestors:

Briefly answer the following questions:

7. What route did Ole Rynning and his group of Norwegian immigrants take in going from New York to Illinois?

8. Name some of the factors that pushed Norwegians out of Norway.

9. Name some of the factors that pulled Norwegians to America.

10. What are some of the factors that influence present day immigrants?

11. What are some reasons for the different waves of immigration?

12. How does Humboldt County's population of English learners compare to the state of California's population.

13. If you were forced to leave America, what three countries would you consider for immigration?

APPENDIX C

Primary Documents, Photographs, Maps, Graphs, and Charts

APPENDIX C1

Ship Rules¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Børge Solem, "The Transatlantic Crossing," p. 3

1. The fire will be lit on the fire place (stove) each morning at 6 o'clock a.m., and every passenger not hindered by sickness or some other valid reason shall get up no later than 7 o'clock a.m.
2. The fire shall be put out at 8 o'clock p.m. and passengers must be in their bunks by 10 o'clock p.m.
3. The deck in the passengers' quarters and under the bunks shall be swept each morning before breakfast, and the sweepings be thrown overboard. Once a week the deck in the passengers' quarters shall be scraped.
4. Each morning before the fire is lit, necessary fuel and water will be distributed to the passengers. This task, and cleaning of the deck and the cabins on deck, will be carried out on a daily basis by a suitable number of men on a rotation basis. This group is also to check the cleanliness of the passengers and adherence to all other regulations.
5. Lamps will be lit in passengers' quarters after dark and be kept burning until 10 o'clock in the evening.
6. Tobacco smoking is not permitted below deck, nor is the use of open flame or hay or straw permitted.
7. All cooking utensils must be washed after use and always be kept clean.
8. All bedding must be taken up on deck once or twice a week and be aired out, and the bunks cleaned each time this is done.
9. Clothing may not be washed or hung up to dry below deck, but each week, as conditions permit, a day will be determined for general washing.
10. All passengers who bring spirits or other alcoholic beverages on board are obligated upon embarking the ship to hand over the same for safekeeping. These passengers may receive a reasonable daily portion. Passengers are forbidden to have gunpowder in their possession, and this as well as guns or other weapons brought on board must be placed in safekeeping with ship's officers. These will be returned to passengers at journey's end.
11. Cards or dice are not allowed on board since these can easily lead to quarrels and disagreements. Passengers should treat each other with courtesy and respect. No quarrelsome or disputatious behavior will be tolerated.
12. No seaman is allowed on the passenger deck, unless he has received orders to do specific work. Nor is any passenger, under any circumstances whatsoever, allowed in the cabin of a crewmember or the ship's galley. It is not permitted to

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drill holes, do any cutting, pound nails or do any other kind of damage to the ship's beams, boards or decks.

13. It is expected of the passengers that they appear on deck each Sunday in clean clothing and that they, as much as circumstances permit, keep the Sabbath.

14. All manner of games and entertainment are permitted and recommended as contributing to the maintenance of good health during a long journey. Personal cleanliness also contributes a good deal to this and is therefore highly recommended to the passengers.

15. Passengers must not speak to the man at the helm.

16. It is taken for granted that every passenger is obligated to obey the orders of the Captain in all respects.

APPENDIX C2

List of Provisions¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷ Børge Solem, “The Transatlantic Crossing,” p. 6

The following is a list of provisions printed by *Det Norske Udvandringselskap* in Christiania (later Oslo) in the 1870s. These provisions were intended to be adequate for an adult for up to ten weeks:

- 70 pounds hard bread (or the equivalent in soft bread or flatbread)
- 8 pounds butter
- 24 pounds meat
- 10 pounds sidepork
- 1 small keg of herring
- 3/8 Td. potatoes
- 20 pounds rye and barley flour
- 1/2 bushel dried peas
- 1/2 bushel pearl barley
- 3 pounds coffee
- 3 pounds sugar
- 2 1/2 pounds syrup
- Quantities of salt, pepper, vinegar and onions

Of course, each passenger may take along the type of provisions desired as long as they are adequate for 10 weeks. [Pound = 454 grams, Td. = tønne = keg]

APPENDIX C3

Description of the Ship's Kitchen¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Børge Solem, "The Transatlantic Crossing," p. 7

"The kitchen where the cooking was done for about 259 passengers was a board shanty about 12 by 16 feet in size and was built on deck near the middle of the it; along the back side of this shanty a box or rather a bin was built about 4 feet wide and about 1 1/2 feet high, and this bin was filled full of sand, and on top of this sand the fires were built and the cooking done. The kettles were set on top of a little triangular frame of iron with three short legs under it, and this people would set anywhere on this bed of sand where they could possibly find or squeeze out room and then start their fire underneath. There was no chimney where the smoke could escape, only an opening in the roof the width of a board over the fire where smoke could go if it wanted to, but most of the time it did not want to because the wind kept it down."

"Early in the morning you could see the women coming up from below with a little bundle of fine split wood in one hand and a little kettle of some kind or a coffee pot in the other, heading for the kitchen, eager to find a vacant place somewhere on this bed of sand large enough to set their kettle on and build a fire under it. But it would not be very late in the day, if the weather was favorable, till every place in the kitchen was occupied, and there would be a large crowd outside waiting for vacant places, which were generally engaged already. And if you sat outside watching the kitchen door you could in 18 minutes time see perhaps half dozen women come out with their aprons over their faces, wiping tears, coughing and almost strangled with smoke. They would stay outside long enough to get their lungs filled with fresh air and the tears wiped out of their eyes, then they would crowd themselves back in again. Perhaps to find the fire and wood removed from their kettle under somebody else's. Then, of course, broad hints and sharp words would be exchanged, and the loser would have to watch the opportunity when her next neighbor would have to go outside for fresh air to get her wood and fire back again. And these were not the only adversities and troubles in the kitchen because it was hardly ever so stormy but that somebody tried to cook something, and if it was too stormy for the women to be on deck the men would generally volunteer to steep tea, cook coffee, or even make a kettle of soup. They would start their fire, put their kettles on, and in a little while the cook shanty would be chock full of men. Some would be on their knees, some sitting flat on the floor while others would be standing outside peering in. Then imagine an oncoming big wave striking the vessel and almost setting it on end, and in a wink of an eye every kettle, coffee pot, and teapot is upset and spilled in the fire and hot ashes. This of course made them scramble for the door and you could see that coming out like swirling bees from a beehive. Some would swear, some could laugh, while others would say they might have known better than to try to cook anything this stormy day, but in less than an hour the shanty would be full again and perhaps going through the whole performance."

APPENDIX C4

Memory of an Emigrant Voyage in the 1850s¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Halfdan Cock-Jensen, "An Emigrant Voyage in the Fifties," 1926, p. 2,
<http://www.nb.no/emigrasjon/vis_data_art_bok.php?lang=eng&dok_id=30614>

As an example, however, of the sufferings and misery that such an emigrant voyage might involve, I wish to relate the story of a trip which I took in 1854 with the above-mentioned ship "Laurvig."

The "Laurvig" was an old vessel, somewhat leaky, poorly equipped, and a poor sailer. Before sailing there was no inspection of the ship or of its equipment. The captain had to arrange everything according to his best judgment, buying a medicine chest and the like. We took on a cargo of about one hundred tons of iron in the hold, and in Gøteborg we took on board about fifty Swedish emigrants, mainly country folks from Dalarna, but also a few persons of the upper classes, for example a minister's and a merchant's families. [Footnote here. Among the emigrants there was also a young Swedish lieutenant of noble family. He had married below his rank and now, with his wife, he was going to make a future for himself on the other side of the Atlantic. The newlyweds were very happy and were constantly billing like two turtle doves. But when the first genuine high sea began, the lieutenant had to seek the railing and to bend his back. During this process, there was heard from him a violent ejaculation: "By all the saints, if I did not lose my teeth!" There was no dentist on board who could furnish him with new ones, and from that day the billing decreased noticeably.] From Gøteborg we sailed up to Norway where we took on about thirty passengers at Helgeraa. They were mainly from the uplands of Drammen. In the later half of July, 1854, all were embarked, about one hundred persons including the crew of twelve men.

There were tears and pale faces on board as we set out to sea. Of the many who now left their fatherland, the great majority never saw the mountains of Norway again. All went well and the weather was fine until we were several degrees west of Ireland. Then began severe storms that lasted a long time, shifting from southeast to northwest, with a terrific sea that brought great suffering to the poor people, who were mainly inland folks. The storm lasted several weeks, off and on like a hurricane. It reached its greatest strength particularly when from the southeast and improved somewhat when it swung around to the northwest. This happened regularly in periods of three days.

One can imagine the suffering of the wretched creatures who were shut up in the dark room night and day, for the hatches were battened as the waves went over the deck continually. The room of the emigrants was lighted by two or three lamps that were burning night and day down there in the poisoned air and amid all the filth. As a result of this wretchedness an unfortunate contagious disease broke out, namely dysentery. It began in the upper bunk aft and continued regularly on starboard until it jumped over to larboard and there spread in the same manner.

The first person who was stricken was a woman from Dalarna, and the cup of her misery was filled when a few days after the outbreak of the disease, she was confined, in the midst of all this wretchedness. The child was cared for by the other mothers as best they could. On the third day after her confinement the woman died, was laid in a casket nailed together from boards, and lowered into the sea. The burial ceremony was simple yet impressive and was performed by the captain and a Swedish judge (a splendid and genial

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man who was of great help to me during the whole voyage). The ship was belayed, the flag hoisted at half-mast, prayers were read, and the coffin was lowered into the sea. With this the melancholy act was over --- until the next time. I shudder even today when I think of the terrible state we were in with so many persons below deck who were fatally ill. Yet the poor unfortunates were gentle and resigned and bore their cross with great patience.

The misery increased day by day. The symptoms of the illness were a violent diarrhea and profuse discharge of blood followed by exhaustion. Finally there appeared a marked swelling all over the body and then the end was near. All astringent medicine on board was used, but to no avail, and it got so bad that the emigrants used crushed brick baked into a pancake, as they imagined this would help them. It was strange that the longer the illness lasted, the greater became their appetite, until death occurred on the fourth, fifth, up to the eighth day.

Now one died after the other till thirteen passengers had been lowered into the sea. At the same time the crew were also infected, and the boatswain, Anders Olsen Bua, died. This death made a deep impression on all of us and the grief of the crew was great. In the first place, the deceased was a capable and kindly boy and, in the second place, the working force of the crew was much weakened, as many were ill. The quantity of sail and other things had to be decreased and consequently the sailing became less rapid and the voyage longer.

As the sickness was continuing and spreading and the last astringent medicine had been used up, in desperation and dread of the result, I resorted to the last expedient: giving the sick laxative oil. For I had heard at home that when nothing else helped, oil must be tried to cleanse the bowels. And with the help of God, this remedy did good service, so that from then on, the afflicted improved noticeably every day and after this no deaths occurred. (Later I was told at the quarantine station in Quebec that oil was the only remedy to which one could resort when all others failed.)

After three weeks of storm and misery, the weather improved somewhat and we had already reached the outer banks of Newfoundland. But here a new grief threatened us. The provisions of the emigrants were almost consumed. The ship had, it is true, some provisions in reserve, but entirely too little for so many, and therefore we faced certain starvation, perhaps even death from famine. Our only hope was that we might get good weather and a calm so that we could fish on the banks. Our prayers were really answered when four or five days later we got a calm on the southern St. Pierre bank, where all fishing tackle was taken into use and we were so fortunate as to catch four large halibuts and eighty-six unusually large codfish. There was great joy both among us and among the emigrants, especially the sick, for now we were plentifully supplied with fresh food for a long time.

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Now we continued with a west wind and beat up the river towards Quebec and two days afterward we reached St. Paul, where we hailed an outbound Canadian vessel and were given two barrels of flour. A few days later, farther up the river, we met a Norwegian boat, if I remember correctly, the "Industri," under Captain August Pettersen of Brevig, from which we were once more supplied with flour and necessary provisions. With greedy eyes, we noticed a large butchered hog hanging on board in the rigging of the "Industri," but we did not succeed in buying any of it.

Two days later, after a voyage from Norway of eleven weeks and three days, we reached the quarantine station, where all --- both the sick and the well --- had to land for inspection. The well embarked again and continued with us to Quebec and about twenty sick remained behind. Only a few days later, however, they joined the rest of us in Quebec.

APPENDIX C5

Gullik O. Gravdal's 1839 Quote¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Thomas C. Blegen, "Historical Introduction to Ole Rynning's True Account of America," p. 8.

“Hardly any other Norwegian publication has been purchased and read with such avidity as this Rynning’s *Account of America*. People traveled long distances to hear ‘news’ from the land of wonders, and many who before were scarcely able to read began in earnest to practice in the ‘America-book,’ making such progress that they were soon able to spell their way forward and acquire most of the contents. The sensation created by Ansten’s return was much the same as that which one might imagine a dead man would create, were he to return to tell of the life beyond the grave. Ministers and bailiffs tried to frighten us with terrible tales about the dreadful sea monsters, and about man-eating wild animals in the new world; but when Ansten Nattestad had said Yes and Amen to Rynning’s Account, all fears and doubts were removed.”

APPENDIX C6

Norwegian / American Comparison Written By Ole Rynning's Father¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Thomas C. Blegen, "Historical Introduction to Ole Rynning's True Account of America," 1926, p. 10.

IN NORWAY	IN NORTH AMERICA
Freedom from taxes on land, so long as we have peace.	Everyone who has land that has been used more than five years must always pay a land tax.
Since the Danish period such taxes have been unknown here.	Fifty per cent of all movable property.
Every man here has to work scarcely one day a year on the roads.	Here every able-bodied man must work four days on the roads.
Good air.	In right many regions very bad air.
Few or no snakes.	An immense number of snakes, which here get into the very houses, and many of them are very poisonous.
Here all the citizens of the state, in both of the united kingdoms, have practically all the essential human rights maintained by wise laws.	Here in many states two-thirds of the people are slaves, who are bought and sold like cattle in Norway.
Here the grain often freezes in many districts.	In the warmer regions it often happens that the grain is blighted or damaged by torrents.
Here we have the sea on all sides much nearer than in America, and as regards Norway the most of the districts are either situated in coastal regions with deep fjords or else are not far from the coast.	Here they have the great Mississippi River, which at Barlien's place of residence is 230 Norwegian miles from the sea, at Beaver Creek somewhat farther away on that side, but here is also communication by water with all the regions around the Great Lakes and with the sea at New York. Still, the distance by land from here [<i>that is, from Beaver Creek to Chicago</i>] is ten Norwegian miles.
Here are plenty of building materials.	Here in many places both logs and stones are lacking, which therefore must be brought long distances.
Here all who will, live at peace with their fellow beings, safe under the protection of laws.	Here they live in harmony with one another ecause every irreconcilable person can move out. As to the Indians, one is not sure of a lasting peace with them.
The daily wages are small here and necessaries cheap. Every well-behaved and industrious man can also here put something	Those who can speak English well and who know a well-patronized trade can get good wages here. But everything that they need is

aside each year.	expensive, so that the real earnings are on the one hand less than one might suppose, and on the other hand of less value than they would have in Norway.
Since the normal ratio obtains here between the two sexes, everyone who is able to support a family can also easily find a wife.	Since about 150,000 people immigrate each year, most of whom are males, many must consequently live there in single blessedness.