



Freedom of Movement—Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Discuss the nature of human migration of groups and individuals and its impact on democratic societies.
- Appreciate the tensions created by having one set of rights and privileges for citizen workers and other sets of rights and privileges for non-citizen workers.
- Understand the concept of guest worker programs and the difference between state-authorized and unauthorized immigration between countries.
- Examine different historical examples of guest worker programs in Europe and North America.
- Explore the influence of economic forces on democratic values and legal protections of persons in different democratic societies.
- Analyze the reasons supporting and opposing the government's adopting a guest worker program.
- Identify areas of agreement and disagreement with other students.
- Decide, individually and as a group, whether the government should adopt a guest worker program; support decisions based on evidence and sound reasoning.
- Reflect on the value of deliberation when deciding issues in a democracy.

Question for Deliberation

Should our democracy have a guest worker program?

Materials

- Lesson Procedures
- Handout 1—Deliberation Guide
- Handout 2—Deliberation Worksheet
- Handout 3—Student Reflection on Deliberation
- Reading
- Selected Resources
- Deliberation Question with Arguments
(optional—use if students have difficulty extracting the arguments or time is limited)



Freedom of Movement—Reading

1 Every country has the right to control who crosses its borders, but people have always moved
2 from one country to another in search of work. Today, millions of people cross national borders.
3 The United Nations estimated in 2005 that the number of migrants worldwide exceeded 190
4 million people. Because many democracies need workers, they offer work visas and other
5 temporary arrangements for people to live and work in their countries. Entry restrictions, however,
6 are often severe. Due to desperate economic conditions in their home countries, millions of people
7 enter richer, more democratic nations illegally in search of work.

8 While foreign workers do not have the privileges and responsibilities of citizens in
9 democracies, these workers are also human beings who have certain basic rights. Democracies try
10 to create a fair and legal system in which both citizen and foreign workers can participate. One
11 proposed solution is a guest worker program.

12 **Migration and Work: Tensions and Opportunities**

13 People have moved from one place to another to find work since before the creation of the
14 modern nation state. Sometimes workers were invited or encouraged to work in new places by
15 either the host or parent government. In the eighteenth century, for example, the czars invited
16 German artisans to settle in and help modernize that country. The East India Trading Company,
17 created by Great Britain in the seventeenth century, openly encouraged settlers to come and work

18 in territories where it did business. At other times, such as in the settlement of the American
19 colonies and later the United States, people were lured by the prospect of work, wealth, and a
20 fresh start. Sometimes such programs were primarily for single men, such as Chinese immigrant
21 workers in the nineteenth century American West. On other occasions, whole families went to
22 work and live in a new land.

23 The privileges of workers in other countries also varied according to time and place. In many
24 cases, workers had specific privileges established through royal decree. Often, however, there
25 were limitations on the ability to buy land, on participation in certain trades, and on activities
26 such as seeking religious converts. How long workers planned or were permitted to stay also
27 varied from place to place, from a few years to centuries. Rarely were foreign workers, as a
28 group, permitted to adopt the political powers and privileges of citizenship.

29 Migrant workers have always evoked strong and often contradictory emotions in their host
30 countries. On the one hand, these nations have work, often in low-skill, low-paying jobs, that
31 immigrants are willing to do. In Russia alone, there are an estimated 10 to 12 million foreign
32 workers, many of them from Azerbaijan, Georgia, and other former Soviet republics. “Russia
33 relies tremendously on immigrant labor, because it is facing a very difficult demographic crisis,”
34 says John Litwack of the World Bank. “It is in Russia’s interests to maintain favorable
35 conditions for migrants, particularly from the former Soviet Union.” Most are working without
36 authorization. Similar demands for workers can be found in the United States, Germany, the
37 Czech Republic, the Baltic countries, and in Scandinavia.

38 On the other hand, native workers and ordinary citizens frequently oppose immigration.
39 American history is replete with examples of anti-immigration laws, attitudes, protests, and even
40 violence, and there are similar feelings and actions today. In Russia, anti-immigration sentiment

41 led to the enactment of a new law in 2007 that limits foreign workers and includes increased
42 police action against illegal workers. Citizens worry about the economic consequences of illegal
43 and foreign workers, who often work for low pay because they are afraid to protest their labor
44 conditions. Citizens also fear that their national identities and democratic traditions will be
45 overwhelmed by immigrants with different customs and languages.

46 ***Gastarbeiter* and *Braceros*: Historical Examples of Guest Worker Programs**

47 Democracies attempt to balance the benefits and challenges of immigration through many
48 means, including temporary worker programs. Two twentieth-century examples are useful for
49 study: the *gasterbeiter* program in West Germany and the *braceros* program in the United States.

50 ***Germany.*** After the Second World War, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)
51 experienced a labor shortage. In response, it recruited foreign migrants to work in the country
52 temporarily. According to Veysel Oezcan of the Social Science Centre Berlin, these migrants,
53 called *gastarbeiter* (“guest workers”), came to work mostly in industrial jobs that required few
54 high-level skills. Using a “rotation principle,” the mostly male migrants were required to return
55 home after one or two years in order to make room for other guest workers. By 1973 when the
56 program ended, West Germany hosted four million foreigners—6.7 percent of the country’s
57 population. Nearly one in four foreign workers came from Turkey.

58 “The idea, originally,” said Michael Bommers of the Institute for Migration Research in
59 Germany, “was that the foreign workers would stay as long as economically necessary, then go
60 home. It didn’t quite go like that.” Instead, many *gastarbeiter* stayed longer than their original
61 term. Work was prosperous and benefited both employers and workers. When the program
62 ended, there were no jobs to return to in their home country, and the great majority of

63 *gasterbeiter* stayed in West Germany. Rich Jones and Heather McGregor of the Bell Policy
64 Center in Colorado explain that “because the program was billed as temporary, neither the
65 German government nor migrant Turks made much effort at assimilation. As a result, many
66 Turks live in rough neighborhoods with high unemployment and second-rate schools, and many
67 still don't speak German.” Until recently, children who were born in Germany of *gasterbeiter*
68 parents were not granted German citizenship and were considered foreigners under the law; a
69 change in 2000 made citizenship easier for persons not of German ancestry. “We came as guest
70 workers and 40 years later we are still guest workers,” said Recep Tuerkoglu, a Turkish leader in
71 Germany. “But the third generation will be German.”

72 **United States.** “Between 1942 and 1964, some 4.6 million Mexicans were admitted to the
73 United States as *braceros* or guest workers to fill jobs on U.S. farms,” according to Philip Martin
74 of the Center for Migration Studies. The program was instituted during the First World War, the
75 Second World War, and the first decades of the Cold War to cover “wartime emergencies”
76 caused by labor shortages. Like the West German program, the U.S. program emphasized
77 unskilled labor. Unlike the Turkish *gastarbeiter*, however, the Mexican *braceros* (the Spanish
78 word for “laborers”) came from a country bordering the United States; in fact, many states in the
79 United States were part of Mexico until the Mexican-American War of 1848. As one result,
80 many unauthorized Mexican agricultural workers joined the legal *braceros* in working on
81 American farms. The fluid nature of the migrants’ work and the generally open border policies of
82 Mexico and the United States led to a relatively easy transition for these workers from home to
83 host country and back again. Many decided to stay in the United States.

84 Martin concludes from the experience in Germany and the United States that “there is
85 nothing more permanent than temporary workers.”

86 **Democracies and Guest Worker Programs**

87 Although guest worker programs differ in specific details, they generally share common
88 features. They are designed to add foreign workers to the labor force without increasing the
89 permanent resident population. Workers are permitted into the host country only for a specific
90 period of time. They hold a different status from regular immigrants who have the opportunity to
91 become citizens. In addition, guest workers are usually sponsored by a specific employer.

92 The European Union introduced in 2007 an initiative to create a temporary visa program with
93 African countries to promote “circular migration”—that is, “sending countries incentives to
94 make sure their nationals return home and instituting penalties if they don’t” (Gerson, 2007). The
95 hope is to create a better, more successful version of the *gasterbeiter* system.

96 The United States already has a guest worker program of sorts. However, responding in part
97 to the pressure created by unauthorized immigration, U.S. President George W. Bush has
98 proposed a more robust guest worker program based on three principles. First, guest workers
99 would be hired “only for jobs that Americans have not taken.” Second, guest workers would
100 work only for a limited period of time before a required trip home; those who failed to leave
101 would become ineligible for legal immigration status or for citizenship. Third, the number of
102 guest workers permitted under the program would depend on what the American economy
103 required. Foreign workers now in the country illegally would be required to pay a “substantial
104 penalty” and go to the “back of the line” when applying for citizenship.

105 **Guest Worker Programs: Supporters and Opponents**

106 Supporters of guest worker programs argue that people will continue to look for work where
107 jobs are available, whether they can work legally or not. Democracies, however, depend on the

108 rule of law. A guest worker program provides a legal structure for immigrants who want to work
109 but not permanently settle in the country. They argue that guest worker programs provide
110 specific legal protections in the workplace. Unlike illegal migrants, whose labor and safety can
111 be exploited, a guest worker program makes sure that the basic rights of all workers are protected
112 in the workplace. A guest worker program also makes better use of limited law enforcement
113 resources, by letting police devote time and money to hunting criminals, smugglers, and even
114 terrorists who try to enter undetected instead of ordinary people just looking for temporary work.

115 In addition, supporters say that guest worker programs can help the nation meet the ebbs and
116 flows of worldwide economic forces. Because of globalization, workers cannot sit still and wait
117 for jobs to come to them. By permitting foreign workers to come and go as the economy
118 requires, democracies and workers both benefit.

119 Guest worker programs also recognize that the needs of temporary workers and of
120 immigrants are different. Temporary workers just want to make money to send back to their
121 families or to return to their host countries as richer people. By contrast, immigrants want a new
122 life in a new land. A guest worker program deals with the needs of temporary foreign workers
123 and leaves the regular immigration process intact. This distinction helps everyone—guest
124 worker, immigrant, and citizen—and promotes social harmony.

125 Opponents of guest worker programs see no real difference between an immigrant and a
126 temporary foreign worker. When guest workers remain without proper authorization, they enter
127 the illegal underground economy the program was supposed to eliminate. Capturing and
128 deporting guest workers who do not want to leave will only increase the legal, social, and
129 international costs associated with other illegal immigrants.

130 Critics also suggest that guest worker programs are really designed to avoid paying all
131 workers a living wage. To compete, employers of citizens and legal immigrants will have to keep
132 their own labor costs down, leaving the workers with less money and fewer benefits.

133 In addition to economic costs, opponents also worry about the *democratic* costs of a guest
134 worker program. Having different rules for two groups of legal workers means one group is
135 second-class and more likely to suffer exploitation. Moreover, legal immigrants will be forced to
136 prove they are rightly here, creating resentment and increasing tensions with the police. The legal
137 apparatus necessary to monitor guest workers may seep into the legal system for citizens, thus
138 reducing everyone's rights.

139 Far from promoting harmony, critics argue, guest worker programs foster alienation. Guest
140 workers get fewer benefits and privileges than citizen workers, and they lack any incentive to
141 integrate into the larger society. As a result, guest workers lack incentives to be good citizens and
142 form their own closed communities that are mistrusting within and mistrusted without. These
143 conditions can lead to unrest, violence, and even terrorism.

144 In the end, workers are people, with human needs, dreams, and rights. Creating ways for
145 workers, employers, and countries to interact to the benefit of all remains a recurring democratic
146 problem.



Freedom of Movement—Selected Resources

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Freedom of Movement—Deliberation Question with Arguments

Deliberation Question

Should our democracy have a guest worker program?

YES—Arguments to Support the Deliberation Question

1. Workers are like water: they will flow to where the jobs are. Poor workers will come to work whether it is officially “legal” or not. Democracies, however, depend on the rule of law. A guest worker program provides a legal structure for immigrants who want to work but not permanently settle in the country.
2. Illegal immigration means a larger class of persons who can be exploited in the workplace. This situation leads to workplace abuses and lower wages overall for legal immigrant workers and native workers. A guest worker program makes sure that the basic rights of all workers are protected.
3. A guest worker program is the best way to make use of limited law enforcement resources. Illegal immigration strains an entire border, and the effort to detect and capture people crossing the border illegally uses police time and equipment. Citizens also suffer because of strains placed on social welfare systems. A guest worker program permits people to legally enter the country through designated ports and crossings, leaving time for the police to hunt the criminals, smugglers, and possible terrorists who wish to enter undetected.
4. A guest worker program can help the nation meet the ebbs and flows of worldwide economic forces. Economies are cyclical, and in the era of globalization workers cannot sit still and wait for jobs to come to them. Permitting foreign workers to come and go as the economy requires will benefit both foreign and native workers alike.
5. The needs of temporary workers are different from those of immigrants. Foreign workers have no intention of staying, and most save their money to send back to their families or to return to their host countries as richer people. Immigrants want a new life in a new land. A guest worker program deals with the needs of temporary foreign workers and leaves the regular immigration process intact.
6. Ambiguity breeds uncertainty, and uncertainty breeds mistrust. A guest worker program creates clear distinctions between those who want to join society permanently and those who simply want to earn extra money for themselves and their families back home.



Freedom of Movement—Deliberation Question with Arguments

Deliberation Question

Should our democracy have a guest worker program?

NO—Arguments to Oppose the Deliberation Question

1. A guest worker program is founded on the illusion that there is a difference between an immigrant and a temporary foreign worker. Workers who come with the intention of just working for a short period of time change their minds and want to stay. A guest worker program fails to account for the possibility of these families taking root in their new country.
2. A guest worker program will do little to address the problem of illegal immigration. If guest workers stay without proper authorization, then they will enter the illegal underground economy that the program was supposed to eliminate in the first place. Capturing and deporting guest workers who do not want to leave will only increase the legal, social, and international costs associated with other illegal immigrants.
3. A guest worker program is a way to avoid paying all workers a living wage. People will do any job: the real question is what employers are willing to pay and what people want to be paid to do it. Because guest workers are a captive work force who cannot complain about about wages or working conditions, employers of citizens and legal immigrants will have to keep their own labor costs down, leaving the workers with less money and few benefits.
4. A guest worker program is at odds with democratic principles. Having two sets of rules for two groups of workers means having two sets of rights. Because of their second-class status, guest workers are more likely to suffer exploitation and less likely to report abuse. Guest workers will experience the same problems that unauthorized migrants experience now.
5. A guest worker program will have significant negative consequences for the legal rights of citizens and legal immigrants. Legal immigrants will be forced to prove that they are rightly here, creating resentment and increasing tensions with the police. The legal apparatus needed to monitor guest workers will seep into the legal system, reducing everyone's rights.
6. Guest worker programs foster alienation and social unrest. Guest workers get fewer benefits and privileges than citizen workers, a situation that often creates resentment. Without incentives to be good citizens and integrate into the larger society, guest workers form their own insular communities. These conditions can lead to violence and even terrorism.