



Writing a Way In: Multiple Perspectives to the President's Executive Action

Overview

The President's executive action on immigration has been greeted with joy, relief, sadness, and contempt. How can one decision trigger so many varied responses? By weaving non-fiction accounts into creative writing, students will be able to write their way into understanding the multiple perspectives that surround this immigration issue.

Extensions and adaptations are available for English Language Learners and readers at multiple levels.

Objective

Students will be able to ...

- write monologues in order to compare and contrast individual reactions to a president's policy decision.

Essential Question

How does an individual's story affect our understanding of an issue or a group of people?

Key Terms

executive action – any action that a president does in order to clarify or enforce a law including, and not limited to, memorandums, statements of policy, and regulations

deferred action – a kind of *quasi-legal status* given when an immigration official communicates to an undocumented person that he or she is not a priority for deportation.

undocumented – a person does not have the official documents that are needed to enter, live in, or work in a country legally.

dramatic monologue – a speech by one person that exhibits his/her thoughts, feelings, and motivations.

Grade 9-12

Common Core Standards

High School

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1](#)

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1](#)

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-12.3](#)

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

C3 Framework

[D2.Civ.13.9-12](#). Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.

Texts & Materials

- [Transcript: Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Immigration](#)
- [Responses to President Obama's Executive Action on Immigration](#) (cut into strips)
- [Executive Action Powerpoint Presentation](#) (if using)
- [Student samples](#) (if using)
- Pen/pencil, paper, audiovisual equipment with Internet connection

Lesson Preparation

- Upload the YouTube video of [President Obama's Speech: Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Immigration](#)
- Upload Katie Couric's [Now I Get It: The Three Sides to the Immigration Story](#)

- Print and cut selected quotes on [Responses to President Obama's Executive Action](#) along dotted lines into strips.

Lesson Procedure

What Was Said

- 1 Begin by asking students what they know about President Obama's Executive Action which was announced on television on November 20th, 2014. Did they watch it? What did he say? Who is affected by the decision? Why is it controversial?
- 2 Explain to students that they are going to be writing creative monologues that compare and contrast the varied responses to President Obama's decision, but *before* they can do that, they have to know what was said so they can understand why there are mixed reactions.
- 3 Review with students the definition of executive action (see above).If you haven't taught our companion lesson "[Just What is Executive Action?](#)", you can tell students that a good way to think about executive action is as a wish list of policies that the president would like to enact. Then draw an analogy to help students understand. For example, similar to this executive branch power, a school principal can use his or her discretion for his/her school in order to carry out a school-wide rule. Among other examples, this could apply to a tardiness or uniform policy.

OPTIONAL: Cue the [video](#) of President Obama's speech and pass out [transcripts](#) to students to follow along as they read. (*The speech is 15 min long, but if you are pressed for time, you can stop after the line "All we are saying is that we are not going to deport you"*). After viewing, ask students what are the three specific actions he is taking. Why is the last one so controversial? Call on students to share out what are some of the reactions anticipated in this speech. Let them know they'll be spending more time on the actual reactions so a brief quote or paraphrase will suffice.

- 4 Cue the video Katie Couric's [Now I Get It: The Three Sides to the Immigration Story](#) which categorizes reactions to the announcement as "Let's Celebrate," "Meh," and "Anger" and provides backstory on the April 2012 Senate bill approved but not taken up by the House. After watching, check for understanding with students and review the actions proposed in the executive action.

Recent Developments

- 5 Subsequent to the November announcement, a lawsuit, *United States v. Texas*, has put a hold on the *expansion* of the current Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative and the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) initiative for the parents of U.S citizens and lawful permanent residents who meet certain criteria. Together, these initiatives could provide as many as 5 million immigrants with temporary relief from deportation. The lawsuit has been appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

OPTIONAL: To learn more about the lawsuit, please see "[Understanding the Legal Challenges to Executive Action](#)."

It is important to let students know that the original DACA program which began in 2012 is *still in effect and is not challenged by the lawsuit*.

OPTIONAL: To learn more about the DACA program, please see "[Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: A DACA Resource Page](#)"

Understanding Individual Responses

- 6 Cut the quotes of individual reactions to the executive action taken from articles into strips and place them inside a hat, bowl, or other container to pass around the class. Have each student select one strip. There are 18 quotes in total, so if you have more than 18 students, it is fine to prepare duplicates. It is also fine to allow students to swap if they absolutely do not like their quote.

OPTIONAL: Review point of view with students. First-person narrative is the point of view where the story is narrated by one person using the pronouns "I" and "we". Third-person narrative is where the story is told from an observer's perspective using the pronouns, "he", "she", "they", etc.

- 7 Explain to students that all of the paper strips contain a single person's response to the Obama's executive action from a newspaper. Allow students time to read their quote silently to themselves.
- 8 In order to model the writing process, chose a response and read it out loud. You may write a few lines in front of the students or you may simply think-aloud the process by which you would start writing a monologue from that person's perspective.
- 9 Ask students what a dramatic monologue is, and if they don't know it, explain that a dramatic monologue is a speech by one person that exhibits his/her thoughts, feelings, and motivations. You might reference popular monologues such as the soliloquys of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or *Macbeth*.
- 10 Discuss with students that some of the quotes passed out offer information such as name, age, and even a little background story, but there is still a lot unknown about the person, including more about what they are thinking or feeling. Use the [student samples](#) provided as models for writing.
- 11 Tell students that they will have 10 min. to write a monologue from the perspective of the individual on their strip of paper. They can make up any details they want about this person as their writing will now be considered a fictional account. The only rule is that they have to include a phrase or sentence from their quote in their monologue. They could use it at the beginning if they are stuck on how to begin or elsewhere. The goal is simply to get a better understanding of how a person is affected by this executive action.

OPTIONAL: Write with students as they are writing and/or circulate around the classroom to provide encouragement.

Staging the Responses or Debrief

- 12 Ask volunteers to read their monologues aloud by standing in a line in front of the class. One student steps up and reads their monologue as if it were a performance and then the next students reads. An alternative to this style, particularly if you have shy readers, is to ask students to swap papers beforehand and then have a peer read another student's monologue.
- 13 Debrief with students about what they heard. What monologue stuck out for them? What word or words resonated with them? How does one person's story affect our understanding of an issue or group of people?

Extension

Have students read *The Washington Post's* article ["The Almost Americans"](#) by Eli Saslow. Write a response: How does the recent executive action affect the lives of *each member* of the Morales family? How is the community in Akron, OH affected?

Responses to Executive Action

1. Jonathan Perez, cofounder of the Immigrant Youth Coalition, is a 27-year-old undocumented asylum seeker who came to the U.S. from Colombia as a child and identifies as queer. He said Obama's action re-enforces the idea that there are “good” immigrants -- parents and students -- and “bad” immigrants. “The good immigrants get something, and then everyone else is going to be criminalized. That’s how we’re taking this. It’s not even a victory,” he said.

Liebelson, Dana. "LGBT Immigrants Slam Obama's Plan: 'He's Not In Support Of Us'" The Huffington Post. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 25 Nov. 2014. Web.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/25/lgbt-immigrants_n_6214944.html

2. “I’m happy for all those families who will be able to stay together now, but there are a lot of guys like me who came with the same dream. Now we’re being left out,” said Mario Juarez, 40, a painter from Guatemala who has spent the last 12 years working odd construction jobs and sending money back home to his wife and three children.

Constable, Pamela. "For Some Undocumented Immigrants, Obama’s Executive Action Doesn’t Change Anything." Washington Post. 21. Nov 2104

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2014/11/21/for-some-undocumented-immigrants-obamas-executive-action-doesnt-change-anything/>

3. A few feet away, Jose Medina, 62, leaned against a chain-link fence and nursed a cold cup of coffee in a styrofoam cup. He said he had fled El Salvador in 1990 and obtained temporary protection as a war refugee, but lost it due to paperwork problems and never found a way to become permanently legal.

“It’s hard being alone here,” Medina said, mentioning that his sister in Maryland had become legal but that she had not been able to help him. “If people are criminals they should be deported, but not if they do honest work,” he added. “We are all out here on the corner because we don’t have work permits. Now maybe we never will.”

Constable, Pamela. "For Some Undocumented Immigrants, Obama’s Executive Action Doesn’t Change Anything." Washington Post. 21. Nov 2104

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2014/11/21/for-some-undocumented-immigrants-obamas-executive-action-doesnt-change-anything/>

Responses to Executive Action

4. "I am trying to have faith, but I'm still not sure whether I will qualify," said Antonio Chavez, 52, a Salvadoran construction worker who has been in the U.S. for 20 years but had lost his original refugee protection long ago due to legal complications. "I wish the president would help all 11 million of us, not just 5 million, but something is better than nothing," he added.

Constable, Pamela. "For Some Undocumented Immigrants, Obama's Executive Action Doesn't Change Anything." Washington Post. 21. Nov 2014

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2014/11/21/for-some-undocumented-immigrants-obamas-executive-action-doesnt-change-anything/>

5. [Juan] Escalante and his parents came to the United States in 2000 when he was 11 years old on a visa. When it came time to renew, the family's lawyer advised them to apply for a Green Card instead because they were "sure to get one." "We became undocumented by way of our lawyer," he said. While Escalante is a beneficiary of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), his parents have lived in fear of deportation every day since losing their secure stay.

Walker, Lauren. "Promise Fulfilled? Activists Respond Differently to Obama's Executive Order." Newsweek. 21. Nov. 2014

<http://www.newsweek.com/promise-fulfilled-activists-respond-differently-obamas-executive-order-286214>

6. "Assuming that the program is like deferred action you would probably have to renew it through USCIS [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services]," said Angy Rivera, core member at the New York State Youth Leadership Council (NYSYLC). "But that is also under the assumption that the program continues running after Obama leaves office. It's literally like giving your whole life over to immigration officials and you are not on the path to citizenship."

Walker, Lauren. "Promise Fulfilled? Activists Respond Differently to Obama's Executive Order." Newsweek. 21. Nov. 2014

<http://www.newsweek.com/promise-fulfilled-activists-respond-differently-obamas-executive-order-286214>

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7. Kevin Escobar, a 17-year-old who crossed the border eight months ago to be reunited with his mother in the District, said young people like him would also like to get some relief.

“I am happy for the people who will benefit from this and will get their papers, but there are many others who are here in search of safety and a better future,” said Escobar, who said he left his native El Salvador to escape gang violence.

“You are at risk of dying just because you are young,” he said. “I had no other choice, but to come here.”

His mother, who has been in the United States for 11 years, won’t qualify under Obama’s plan, he said. “She has worked hard and has paid her taxes, but she is not covered because I wasn’t born here.”

Constable, Pamela. "Illegal Immigrants to Rally at White House, Thank Obama for Deportation Reprieve." Washington Post.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/illegal-immigrants-to-rally-at-white-house-thank-obama-for-deportation-reprieve/2014/11/21/145ccea0-71a0-11e4-893f-86bd390a3340_story.html.

8. A few feet away from the rally, a protester in military fatigues shouted through a bullhorn, “You are all illegal” and “Obama is the number one coyote,” using a word for guides who smuggle migrants into the United States. The man refused to identify himself to a reporter.

Constable, Pamela. "Illegal Immigrants to Rally at White House, Thank Obama for Deportation Reprieve." Washington Post.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/illegal-immigrants-to-rally-at-white-house-thank-obama-for-deportation-reprieve/2014/11/21/145ccea0-71a0-11e4-893f-86bd390a3340_story.html.

9. “I’m scared that my family will be torn apart,” said Maria Ramos, 21, who moved here from Zacatecas, Mexico, in 1994 and was granted a deferral in 2012 while her parents remained here illegally. “It’s scary to think my mom could get deported. They’re going to tear our family apart. I wouldn’t want that for other people to experience.”

Nagourney, Adam, Ian Lovett, and Vinu Goel. "Turmoil Over Immigration Status? California Has Lived It for Decades." The New York Times. The New York Times, 22 Nov. 2014.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/23/us/turmoil-over-immigration-status-california-has-lived-it-for>

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[decades.html? r=0>](#).

10. Esther Cervantes, 53, who came here illegally nearly 20 years ago and packs the grapes her husband picks, paid to have her children brought over in 2000; they all received deportation deferrals under Mr. Obama's earlier act and are thus assured a future here.

"I was expecting this to help me," she said. "But for me, there's nothing. I don't have children who are citizens or residents."

Nagourney, Adam, Ian Lovett, and Vinu Goel. "Turmoil Over Immigration Status? California Has Lived It for Decades." The New York Times. The New York Times, 22 Nov. 2014. <[11. "California is more politically and emotionally evolved on this topic than the rest of the country," said Bill Whalen, a fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.... "We have been through this for 20 years now. It's the California existence: You are familiar with illegal immigration, you probably tapped into it in some way — hiring someone illegally to look after your children or tend your lawn."](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/23/us/turmoil-over-immigration-status-california-has-lived-it-for-decades.html? r=0>.</i></p><hr/></div><div data-bbox=)

Nagourney, Adam, Ian Lovett, and Vinu Goel. "Turmoil Over Immigration Status? California Has Lived It for Decades." The New York Times. The New York Times, 22 Nov. 2014. <[12. Both are undocumented. Both fled their home countries for the relative safety of America. Both paid men called "coyotes" to sneak them across the Texas border. Both are studying for the GED at the \[Next Step Public Charter School\]\(#\) in Columbia Heights, their neighborhood, where 34 percent of residents identify as Latino. Both dream of better jobs, an economic shot for their kids.](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/23/us/turmoil-over-immigration-status-california-has-lived-it-for-decades.html? r=0>.</i></p><hr/></div><div data-bbox=)

One of these mothers will be helped by President Obama's immigration move. The other will not.

A matter of five years separates them. The difference will define their futures: One mother arrived in 2007. The other, seven months ago.

Paquette, Daniel. "They Both Came Here Illegally. Only One Will Be Helped by Obama's Immigration Action." Washington Post. <[Page 9 of 12](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/storyline/wp/2014/11/21/they-both-came-here-illegally-only-one-will-be-helped-by-obamas-immigration-action/>.</i></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Responses to Executive Action

13. "A lot of people are using the term bittersweet, but I don't think that's enough to describe the amount of emotion I'm feeling right now," Deyanira said after Obama's speech ended, voice still quivering because she was processing Obama's announcement. "Unfortunately my mom didn't qualify and I didn't know how to call my brothers and sister and tell them that it wasn't our turn. I told them to call mom and tell her we love her. I can handle it, but I don't know how well she's taking it. It's heartbreaking." Other organizers around her hugged one another and chanted, "My family is somebody and they deserve full equality."

Yu-Hsi Lee, Esther. "Forget The Pundits: Reactions To Obama's Speech From The Immigrants Who Are Actually Impacted." ThinkProgress RSS.

<http://thinkprogress.org/immigration/2014/11/21/3595394/executive-action-reactions-watch-parties/>.

14. "Tonight the President announced his intention to pursue amnesty for illegal immigrants through executive action. This decision, counter to his own statements over the last few years, represents the very height of Presidential arrogance and signifies a dangerous shift from a nation of laws to a nation of men. In order to achieve some sort of gain for his political party, the President risks damage to the rule of law in our nation, but he also threatens a more immediate impact on those here legally, those following the legal process to gain entry into our country, and others struggling to find work in a fragile economy. Our border states will also be further stressed as they deal with another, almost certain surge of additional illegal immigrants looking for similar treatment from this White House." – U.S. Senator Richard Burr (R-NC)

Henkel, Clayton. "Obama's Immigration Plan Draws Mixed Response; McCrory Open to Legal Action." The Progressive Pulse. <http://pulse.ncpolicywatch.org/2014/11/20/obamas-immigration-plan-draws-mixed-response-threat-of-a-lawsuit/>

15. The American people should not be manipulated into believing that they are heartless simply because they want to preserve the rule of law in our nation and look after their own before they take in others," author Ben S. Carson wrote in the *Washington Times*. "We also have to consider the millions of people who have immigrated here legally as well as those who are in the queue," he added. "It is incredibly unfair to them to grant amnesty to those who have jumped ahead of them in line illegally."

Balthazar, Claudia. "Immigration Reform Executive Order: House Republicans to Respond to Obama Next Week." Latin Post RSS. <http://www.latinpost.com/articles/26668/20141127/immigration-reform->

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[executive-order-house-republicans-to-respond-to-obama-next-week.htm>](#).

16. Some people, like Bob Davis, 81, of Northern California, had a difficult time watching the speech. The president's words stung.

Less than a month ago, Davis' grandson, a sheriff's deputy, was killed by a man who had been deported multiple times.

"I respect Latinos," Davis said. "They work their fannies off, but there has to be a legal process. Letting in 5 million people like that just encourages more lawlessness."

Bermudez, Esmeralda, Anh Do, and Brittany Mejia. In L.A., relief and joy greet Obama's immigration plan Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times. Web. 3 Dec. 2014. <<http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-1121-obama-immigration-reaction-20141121-story.html>>.

17. Obama's action will take away much-needed jobs from Americans, said Joe Guzzardi, national media director for Californians for Population Stabilization, a Santa Barbara-based organization pushing for stricter immigration laws.

"Why is it necessary to reward them with government IDs and work permits that are only going to hurt the legal people who are trying so hard to get a job or hold on to a job?" he said.

Bermudez, Esmeralda, Anh Do, and Brittany Mejia. In L.A., relief and joy greet Obama's immigration plan Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times. Web. 3 Dec. 2014. <<http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-1121-obama-immigration-reaction-20141121-story.html>>.

18. In Pasadena, Lidia Rosa, 32, heard the news by phone from her sister. She came from Honduras in 2005 and has struggled to find work without a Social Security number. She was so happy she danced with a friend and yelled, "We qualify, we qualify."

Bermudez, Esmeralda, Anh Do, and Brittany Mejia. In L.A., relief and joy greet Obama's immigration plan Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times. Web. 3 Dec. 2014. <<http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-1121-obama-immigration-reaction-20141121-story.html>>.

Student Samples

From #4

“I am trying to have faith. After 20 years of living in the United States, I now may have a chance to stay legally, but I am unsure if I qualify. I wish the President would help all 11 million of us. I had refugee protection when I got here, but I lost it. I just want to stay. I have built a home and a life here. Every morning I go to work just like everyone else. Someone always needs a hand laying foundation or fixing some part of their house. I’m a construction worker. That’s not the life I imagined for myself, but it’s better than what I had at home in El Salvador. I didn’t have much of a future there. It was too violent for me. That’s why I had to leave. But I couldn’t renew my papers and so I’ve never been able to do things legally in the US like drive a car or vote, things most people take for granted. But I can’t. I have to look over my shoulder constantly to be sure I don’t get caught and sent back. You don’t understand, if I hadn’t left, I probably wouldn’t be alive right now. I didn’t want to leave my mother in her condition, which even then was frail, but what choice did I have? She told me to go. She practically gave me all she had left so I could go. I can’t go back. See, there’s no one there for me anyway anymore.”

From #11

“You are familiar with illegal immigration. You probably tapped into it in some way hiring someone illegally to look after your children or tend to your lawn. The truth is the acceptance of illegal immigration serves me and everyone else who exploits the system. Got cheap veggies? Ever wonder why? At what cost? Practically everyone I know is tapped into the illegal immigration system. You have to be really conscious of every choice you make to not be. And I just don’t get it. A lot of people say they don’t want illegal immigrants. Some people even say we should deport them. But then when I ask them would they want to pay more for their childcare or their fruits and veggies, they don’t want to. And when I ask if it’s fair these people get paid less than a minimum wage, they would rather not talk about it. I just think we need to be realistic in this country. Look, I get it. I have two kids, a family to support. I want them to go to college and have careers. I have bills to pay too. It’s a lot easier to keep paying lower costs for things than to admit there’s something wrong going on here, but it’s becoming unavoidable to not to do anything at all.”