From the time he came to the United States as a child, Marcos studied hard while his parents worked long hours. Now he is a top student in his high school class. But he may not be able to go to college because the government won’t give him the same help it gives to other students. There are jobs that he will not be allowed to take, even though he could do the work. And he won’t be allowed to get his driver’s license. Marcos is an undocumented immigrant, someone who doesn’t have papers that prove he has the right to live in America. The laws and programs that help many people in America exclude Marcos and his family.

Some people say it’s unfair that our laws exclude hardworking people. They think America is a place where everyone should have equal rights. Some want the government to give undocumented immigrants amnesty, so that they can become legal immigrants. The U.S. passed a law like this once before. It let immigrants who had been in America from 1982 to 1986 get legal documents. Some people argue that immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children should be given amnesty. They shouldn’t be punished for something they had no control over. Many argue that the U.S. should pass a new amnesty law to help people like Marcos and his family.

Other people say that because Marcos’ family broke the law when they entered the country, they should not have the same rights as legal immigrants. These people believe there should not be amnesty for undocumented immigrants. They say we should orient our immigration laws toward protecting those who went through the proper channels, not those who “jumped the line.” As it is, they say, we don’t have enough jobs to go around, or enough money to pay for everyone’s education. Giving amnesty to undocumented immigrants will only compound the problem.

What do you say? Should there be amnesty for undocumented immigrants?

Questions for Classroom Discussion:
- What is amnesty?
- Why do some people think undocumented immigrants should get amnesty?
- Why do some people think amnesty for undocumented immigrants is not a good idea?
- Should immigrants who arrived as children be granted amnesty?
USE THE FOCUS WORDS  * and alternate parts of speech

**amnesty** (noun) official forgiveness

*Sample Sentence:* Some people want the government to give undocumented immigrants *amnesty*, so that they can become legal immigrants.

*Turn and Talk:* Can you think of a reason that a person would be granted *amnesty* for murder?

**undocumented** (adjective) without legal papers

*Sample Sentence:* Marcos is an *undocumented* immigrant, someone who doesn’t have papers that prove he has the right to live in America.

*Turn and Talk:* Some people who were brought to the U.S. when they were young have done well in school, but because they are *undocumented*, they can’t get financial aid to go to college. What should be done?

**orient** (verb) to adjust, to align

*Sample Sentence:* Some say the United States should *orient* its immigration laws toward protecting those who went through the proper channels, not those who “jumped the line.”

*Turn and Talk:* Are there enough movies that are *oriented* to teenagers? Explain.

**exclude** (verb) to leave out

*Sample Sentence:* Programs that help many people in America often *exclude* undocumented immigrants.

*Turn and Talk:* Do you think it is ever okay to *exclude* people from a school activity?

**compound** (verb) to add to

*Sample Sentence:* Some think that forgiving people who entered the country without permission will only *compound* problems like unemployment.

*Turn and Talk:* Does punishing children physically teach them a valuable lesson or simply *compound* their behavior issues? Explain.

*compound* (adjective) having two or more parts

*Sample Sentence:* *Compound* microscopes use two lenses to magnify an object.

*Turn and Talk:* A *compound* word brings together two or more independent words, like lifeguard, babysit, or loudspeaker. Can you think of other *compound* words?
DO THE MATH

All immigrants must adapt to a strange new culture. **Undocumented** immigrants face a **compound** problem: They must adapt without revealing that they entered the country illegally. This means that **undocumented** immigrants are **excluded** from opportunities that help other immigrants **orient** themselves in the United States. An **amnesty** could give back these opportunities. But how many **undocumented** immigrants are there?

Option 1: According to the Department of Homeland Security, the **undocumented** immigrant population was 11.6 million in 2008. It dropped to 10.8 million in 2009. What happened to the population of **undocumented** immigrants between 2008 and 2009?

A. It decreased by about 4.3%
B. It decreased by about 5.1%
C. **It decreased by about 6.9%**
D. It increased by about 7.9%

Option 2: In 2008, the number of **undocumented** Mexican immigrants in the U.S. was 6.65 million. The year before, in 2007, the number of **undocumented** Mexican immigrants had been 380,000 higher. Describe the decrease from 2007 to 2008 as a percentage.

The number of undocumented Mexican immigrants decreased by about 5.4%.

**Discussion Question:** When asked to explain the decrease in **undocumented** immigrants in 2009, officials gave a **compound** answer. They said it was partly due to increased border security, and partly due to the slow U.S. economy. The slow economy caused many people, including immigrants, to lose their jobs. With less potential to get a better job in the United States, there was less incentive to come to the U.S., and the rate of immigration declined.

Some people want to keep lowering the number of **undocumented** immigrants by **excluding** them from the workforce. People who support this idea say that instead of considering **amnesty**, we should punish employers who hire **undocumented** workers. This will make it even less likely that **undocumented** immigrants will be able to find jobs by coming to the U.S. Is this a good solution? Why or why not?
Mr. Seemy’s class is debating immigration amnesty. Cesar and his family are undocumented immigrants. Cesar has the highest GPA in the class.

“I can’t afford college,” says Cesar. “College grants and loans are oriented toward American citizens. People like me get excluded. What kind of career can I have? I don’t have papers. Having no college education will compound my problems. I’ll probably get stuck in a low-paying job. With amnesty, I can get a better education and a better job.”

“You’re assuming an amnesty would lead to a better job,” says Takemi. “You can’t predict the future.”

“We can’t predict the future with certainty, but we can look at what has happened in the past,” says Mr. Seemy. “Let’s investigate!”

Cesar and Takemi find the following study and share it with the class.

**Question:**
Do immigration amnesties lead to better jobs for undocumented immigrants?

**Hypothesis:** The immigration amnesty of 1986 resulted in better jobs for at least 30% of undocumented immigrants.

**Subjects:** 10 immigrants who became legal during the 1986 amnesty.

**Procedure:**
1. Interview subjects:
   - Ask about jobs held before the amnesty.
   - Ask about jobs held after the amnesty.
2. Analyze the subjects’ answers to find out how many got better jobs after the amnesty, and how many maintained similar jobs despite the amnesty.

**Data:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Got Better Jobs</th>
<th>Got Similar Jobs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After 1986 Amnesty</td>
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**Real Research**
The paper cited below says that the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) led to better jobs for previously undocumented immigrants. By 1992, 48% of men and 38% of women subjects had secured better jobs than they had held as undocumented immigrants. All subjects attained legal status under the IRCA.


**A “Better” Job?**
The study used the Nam-Powers Occupational Status score, which assigns scores to occupations based on workers’ average earnings and average education.

**Classroom Discussion:** Summarize the real research. (By 1992, 48% of men and 38% of women who gained legal status through the 1986 amnesty had better jobs.) Are students surprised by this finding? Why or why not? How does the finding connect to this week’s topic? Which side(s) of the debate could it support?
Jot down a few notes on how to support your position during a discussion or debate.

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Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:

"Can you show me evidence in the text that..."

"I believe that..."

"You make a good point, but have you considered..."

"I agree with you, but..."

"And..."
TAKE A STAND

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

amnesty | undocumented | orient | exclude | compound

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