

# IMMIGRANTS



**a Talking Points  
English Lesson**

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Illegal Alien.....	4
Reading Comprehension Questions.....	7
Essential Vocabulary.....	8
Discussion Questions.....	9
The Problems of Being an Immigrant.....	11
Debate: No Immigrants!.....	14
Role Play: Andrei and his Co-worker.....	16
Writing.....	17
Credits.....	18

## Introduction

What is an illegal alien?

Do you have illegal aliens in your country? What do they do?

What should be done to help them? Should we help them?

## Illegal Alien

### *Read Andrei's account below:*

I am not legally allowed to work here in the UK. But I have no choice. I have to do something. I have a family to feed back in my own country and so I do it for them.

I work as a carpenter in my own country — it is what I am trained to do — but here I do whatever I can. I do carpentry work but also other work in the construction industry.

I live in a house with many other people. The house is small and should only have one family living inside — but I think we have maybe twenty people living here. I can't remember exactly, I've lost count.

All the guys I live with are from my country. We cook together, eat together. We help each other when we can. We all send money back home to help our families.

One of the guys in our house is 63 years old. He has a family and grandchildren. I really don't want to be like that when I am his age. It is no way to live — an old man living in a filthy house with twenty strangers and doing odd-jobs here and there? It's just a terrible existence.

Right now I am lucky. I have work that I can do. There is a big construction site on the outskirts of town and they need a lot of workers. But it is not regular. Sometimes they call me and they say: We need you for three days, can you do it?

Of course, I always say yes. Because if I say no, I worry that they will never call me again.

If I am not working on the construction site I can do some work for this other company. Helping them make window frames and door frames. It's easy work for me but the money is not that great.

I try to work every day of the week except Sunday. I work long hours — up to 12 hours a day. So by the time it gets to the end of the week I am exhausted.

On Saturday night, I go out with my friends and we eat something together, drink a little beer and try to relax. We talk about our families so far away and our wives and children.

Sometimes the guys get upset. We miss our homes and our families very much.

On Sunday, I sleep all day. I might go outside and walk around a little. But then on Monday, it is back to work again and many hours every day.

I have been here for two years. I think I will do one more year, maybe two. Then I will go back home. I cannot live like this for too long.

I hope I can start my own business in my own country. Nothing too fancy. But I want to start a carpentry business. I think the economy is going up so maybe I can do this.

It is my dream.

But for now, I have to stay here and live a life that is very uncomfortable.

## Reading Comprehension Questions

Is Andrei legally allowed to work in the UK?

Why does he do it?

What is his job? What kind of work does he do in the UK?

In your own words, describe Andrei's living conditions?

Does he have regular work?

Where is he currently working?

What is the other job he does?

Does he work every day of the week?

How many hours a day does he work?

What does Andrei do every Saturday evening?

What does he do on Sunday?

How long has he been in the UK?

What is his plan for the future?

## Essential Vocabulary

legally	allowed	no choice
carpenter	trained	construction
lost count	filthy	strangers
odd-jobs	terrible	existence
site	outskirts	regular
window frames	exhausted	relax
upset	to miss	fancy
economy	uncomfortable	

### Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

**Notebook**—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

***“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”***

## Discussion Questions

What do you make of Andrei's life? Is he happy do you think? Why/why not?

Do you think Andrei is being exploited in his jobs?

Why does he live in such cramped conditions? Is he so poor do you think?

Andrei talks about a 63-year-old man in his house. What will happen to him in the future?

What does Andrei think about on his Sundays? When he walks around, what goes through his mind?

What kind of problems does Andrei encounter regularly in the UK?

Are there many immigrants in your country? How are they regarded? Do people like them? Dislike them?

Why do people go to another country? What are they looking for? Are they trying to escape from something in their own country?

What rights should immigrants have? What rights do immigrants have in your country?

Should all immigrants speak the language of the country they are in? Why/why not?

Would you like to go and live in another country? Which country?  
Why?

Do immigrants to another country improve the country? Or not?  
Explain your reasons.

Are we all immigrants? (Think long about this question!)

# **The Problems of Being an Immigrant**

For many immigrants – legal or not – they face some very difficult problems in their day to day lives.

Below are a few of some of the issues they may face.

Go through all of these in the class, then try to offer solutions to help immigrants overcome these difficult barriers in their lives.

## **Language**

Many immigrants arrive in the country unable to speak a word of the country.

What can be done about this? Is it the responsibility of the individual? Or the host country? Or both?

## **Racism**

Immigrants can often be on the receiving end of racism. The local people may look down on them, or say bad words about them – or worse.

What can be done about this? Should laws be put in place? Should the immigrants be protected against such racist attacks?

## **Employment**

Immigrants often struggle to find regular paid work. They may have to do illegal work and they are often exploited.

What can be done to stop this? Are there laws to prevent this from happening? Should immigrants have the same rights as local people for jobs?

## **Isolation**

For many people arriving in a new country, they may feel isolated and alone. They have no friends and no one to talk to.

How to solve this problem? What can the immigrants do to be less lonely? Can the local authorities start clubs and social events to help the immigrants find other people to talk to?

## **Housing**

What can be done about this? Many immigrants are forced to live in sub-standard housing, often with twenty people to one house. Whose responsibility is it to house these people? Them or the local authorities?

## **Access to Services**

What should be done about this? Many immigrants do not have access to basic services, such as healthcare or education. Who is responsible for this?

## **Cultural Differences**

And then lastly, many immigrants to a new country come from a very different culture. Thus there are many cultural differences they have to learn. Who should take responsibility for this?

***Go through all the examples of immigrant problems above in your class. Try to find working solutions for all of them.***

## **Debate: No Immigrants!**

This is a debate activity. Divide the class into two groups of equal number.

You should also choose or elect a debate chairperson. This person must chair the debate and ensure everyone gets an equal opportunity to speak.

### **No Immigrants Here**

There is a drive by the city council to bring more immigrants into the city. People believe this will help in the long-term by providing workers for all the jobs that locals do not want.

There is also the feeling that the city is richer than other places so they have a moral duty to help others.

But this has been met by some resistance.

Divide the class into two teams – for and against.

### **For Team**

Your team wants the immigrants to come to the city. These people can do all the jobs the locals do not want to do. Plus the city has a moral duty to provide a sanctuary for them.

There are other benefits too – such as diversity and bringing new cultures to the city.

### **Against Team**

Your team is very much against the immigrants. The city has a moral duty to look after its own people. The jobs should be paid more so that locals are willing to do them.

And what are the benefits of diversity anyway? This is just a dream!

In your groups, spend some time to come up with some strong, valid points that you can bring up in the debate.

***When you are ready, begin the debate.***

## **Role Play: Andrei and his Co-worker**

**This is a role play exercise.**

In this role play, there are two characters – Andrei and one of his co-workers.

His co-worker is from the UK and wants to know why Andrei has come to the UK to work and live.

He has many questions, such as:

- Why do you come here to live and work?
- Is the UK better than your own country? If so, why?
- What difficulties do you face every day?
- Do you miss your family?
- Do you want to go back home one day?

Then after the co-worker has asked all their questions, Andrei has questions to ask his co-worker.

In the role play, you should think of all the questions to ask each other.

***Practise your role play in pairs, then show the class.***

## Writing

In this writing exercise, you should pretend to be Andrei writing a letter to his wife and children.

In the letter, he describes his life in the UK.

***Does he tell them the truth, and possibly make them worry?***

***Or does he tell them a different story, so they don't feel alarmed?***

It is up to you how you write your letter.

Try to include a little story about working and living in the UK.

***When you have finished writing your letter, you can read it out loud in class. Or give it to your teacher for review and feedback.***

## Credits

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