

Lesson Plan: How Much Do Undocumented Immigrants Pay in Taxes?

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Featured resources

[KQED's The Lowdown: How Much Do Undocumented Immigrants Pay in Taxes?](#)



Aracell Arroyo/Flickr

[CNBC: Why Undocumented Workers in the US File Their Tax Returns](#) (1:53)

[CBS News: Immigrant Student Speaks Out About Viral Post on Paying Taxes](#) (6:45)

Opening quick write prompt:

Do you think undocumented immigrants pay any taxes? Why or why not? Should they?

A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.

Objective

- Students will analyze the kind of taxes that many undocumented immigrants pay.
- Students will evaluate and reflect on common misconceptions about undocumented immigrants and how they contribute to the economy.

Essential Question and Lesson Context

Why do undocumented immigrants pay taxes? What misconceptions do I have about ways undocumented immigrants contribute to the economy?

President Trump and other officials have characterized undocumented immigrants as a drain on the system, taking advantage of services but contributing little in return. In fact, undocumented immigrants pay billions in taxes each year, including into Social Security, a benefit that few end up receiving. In this lesson, students examine facts about the taxes undocumented immigrants pay and common debates about undocumented immigrants, including whether they place a strain on the economy or contribute to it.

Key vocabulary

Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the activity, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).

Word	Simple definition
Compliance (n.)	Doing what has been asked or ordered
Generate (v.)	To produce something
Left-leaning (adj.)	Supporting liberal or progressive issues (generally Democratic)
Right leaning (adj.)	Supporting conservative causes or issues (generally Republican)

Direct instruction and guided practice

- Discuss the quick-write prompt to gauge what students think or already know about this issue, but don't tell them yet that undocumented immigrants **do** pay taxes. (*Be aware you may have students who are undocumented or have undocumented family members. To learn more about discussing sensitive topics, check out [this post](#) from the New York Times Learning Network.*)
- Explain that students will watch a video and read a post that will reveal the answer. As students watch, they should make note of facts they learned and points that surprised them.
- As a class or in small groups, students watch [this short CNBC video](#) (1:38.) and read [The Lowdown post](#).
- After watching the video and reading the post, ask students to share what they learned and/or what surprised them.
- Transition to independent practice:** Ask: How would you respond to the President Trump on this issue if you were an undocumented immigrant who paid taxes? Why do so many people not believe that undocumented immigrants do actually pay taxes? Call on a few students to respond.

Independent practice

- Explain that students will hear an interview with Belen Sisa, an undocumented college student who pays taxes and whose Facebook post on this issue recently went viral. As they watch, students should look for more common misconceptions about undocumented immigrants that Belen addresses.
- As a class, individually or in small groups, students watch the [CBS video](#).

Assessment/Reflection

- Make a list of common misconceptions that Belen brings up in her interview. Don't forget the misconception that undocumented immigrants don't pay taxes. Add other important facts from the videos and the Lowdown post about how undocumented immigrants contribute to the economy, what services they use and the percentage of undocumented workers who do and don't pay taxes.
- Individually or in groups, students choose a misconception or fact about the economic impact of undocumented immigrants. They then create an infographic, poster or presentation to set the record straight. This project should center on sharing facts, not opinions about immigration policy. Any fact or misconception included in the videos, the Lowdown post or other reliable sources can be used.
 - [AdobeSpark](#), [piktochart](#), [Prezi](#), [Canva](#), and [Thinglink](#) are all free, online tools that can be used for infographics, posters or presentations.
- Students share their infographic, poster or presentations with the class OR complete a gallery walk that allows them to see each group or individual presentation.

Extension/Homework

Write/speak locally: Students research ways to share their poster or presentation with their community. (Example: Presenting during the public comment section of a city council meeting, posting on an online forum, etc.) For a list of how to contact local officials in your area, check out [KQED Learning's Local Election Toolkit](#).

Common Core standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.6	Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.8	Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.