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Lesson Plan: Packing for a New World

Materials Needed:

- Several index cards or small pieces of paper
 - A pen or marker
 - A large piece of paper or a small box (to represent a "suitcase")
 - Drawing supplies (crayons, colored pencils)
 - Notebook or journal for writing
 - Access to the internet for an optional extension activity
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Lesson Details

Subject: U.S. History

Grade Level: 4th-5th Grade (Age 10)

Topic: Motivations for European Colonization of America ("Push" and "Pull" Factors)

1. Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the student will be able to:

- Identify and explain at least three different reasons (e.g., religious, economic, social) why people left Europe to settle in the American colonies.
- Create a "Colonist's Suitcase" that reflects the specific motivations and practical needs of a person traveling to the New World.
- Write a short diary entry from the perspective of a colonist, explaining their personal reasons for making the journey.

2. Lesson Activities & Procedure

Part 1: The Hook - Why Would You Leave? (5 minutes)

Begin with a conversation to connect the topic to the student's own life.

- Ask: "Imagine your family decided you were all moving to a brand new, mysterious planet. You could never come back to Earth. What would be a good reason to go? What would be a bad reason that might force you to leave?"
 - Listen to their ideas and introduce the idea that, hundreds of years ago, moving from Europe to America felt just as enormous and risky as moving to another planet.
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Part 2: The "Push & Pull" Sorting Game (15 minutes)

This hands-on activity helps categorize the different motivations.

1. **Preparation:** Before the lesson, write the following reasons on individual index cards:
 - The King says I have to belong to his church, but I don't want to. (Push)
 - I heard you can get your own land for free in America! (Pull)
 - There are no jobs here, and my family is hungry. (Push)
 - I want a new adventure and a chance to get rich. (Pull)
 - I am in debt and could be sent to prison. (Push)
 - I am the third son of a nobleman and won't inherit any land. (Push)
 - I want the freedom to practice my own religion with my community. (Pull)
 - The cities are overcrowded and dirty. (Push)
2. **Activity:** Create two piles: a "Push Pile" (reasons that PUSHED people out of Europe) and a "Pull Pile" (reasons that PULLED people toward America). Read each card aloud together and have the student decide which pile it belongs in, discussing their reasoning for each one. This teaches the core concepts of migration in a simple, interactive way.

Part 3: Creative Application - Pack Your Bags! (20 minutes)

This is the main project, focusing on application and creative thinking.

1. **Choose a Character:** Have the student pick a type of person who might have made the journey. For example:
 - **A Puritan Farmer:** Leaving for religious freedom but also needing to farm.
 - **A Young Adventurer:** Leaving for a chance at fame and fortune (like finding gold).
 - **A Poor Craftsperson:** Leaving because they have no work and are in debt.
2. **Pack the Suitcase:** Give the student the large piece of paper or box (their "suitcase"). Tell them they can only pack **six** items for their new life. They must think about who they are and why they are leaving.
3. **Task:** The student should draw or write their six items in their "suitcase." For each item, they must explain *why* they chose it.
 - *Example for the Puritan Farmer:* 1. **Holy Bible** (for religious guidance), 2. **Farming Seeds** (to grow food), 3. **An Ax** (to clear land and build a home), 4. **A Wool Blanket** (for the cold journey), 5. **An Iron Cooking Pot** (to cook for the family), 6. **Family Locket** (to remember home).

Part 4: Assessment - A Diary from the Past (15 minutes)

This summative assessment checks for understanding through creative writing.

- Using their chosen character and packed suitcase as inspiration, have the student write a short diary entry in their notebook.
- **Prompt:** "It is the night before our ship leaves for America. Write a diary entry explaining why you are leaving and what you hope to find in the New World. Mention one special item you packed and why it is so important to you."
- This task directly assesses whether the student can articulate a motivation for leaving from a historical perspective.

3. Differentiation & Extension

- **For Extra Support:** Provide a pre-written list of 20 items and have the student choose their six from the list. Offer sentence starters for the diary entry, such as "I am leaving England because..." and "In America, I hope to..."
- **For an Extra Challenge:** Have the student research a specific colony (like Jamestown or Plymouth) and tailor their character, packing list, and diary entry to the known challenges and goals of that specific settlement. For example, a Jamestown colonist might pack items for finding gold, while a Plymouth colonist would prioritize items for building a religious community.

4. Wrap-Up & Discussion (5 minutes)

Review the student's work and discuss the big ideas.

- Ask: "Looking at all these reasons, which one do you think was the most powerful motivator for people? Greed? Fear? Hope? Why?"
- Connect back to the opening question: "Do you think you would have been brave enough to make the journey? What would have been the hardest thing to leave behind?"

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