

Charting the Best Path

A team project comparing Sephardic migration routes and evaluating success

Subject	History, Migration Studies, Data Analysis
Grade level	Secondary and undergraduate (capstone)
Duration	Three to four weeks
Skills	Comparative analysis, criteria-based reasoning, argumentation
Tools	Sephardi Spaces database and world map, AI assistant, StoryMaps/ArcGIS

Overview

In this capstone project, teams use the database and world map to analyze Sephardic migration. Students reconstruct several real routes, define what success in migration means, and build an evidence-based argument for which path, among those they studied, gave the best outcomes to the people who traveled it. The aim is to reason rigorously about opportunity, risk, and survival from historical evidence. Teams need not settle on a single correct answer.

Learning objectives

Students will be able to:

- Reconstruct and compare several migration routes using database and map evidence.
- Define and defend criteria for judging a migration's success.
- Weigh trade-offs among safety, economic opportunity, community continuity, and cultural preservation.
- Present a reasoned, evidence-backed argument in a project format.

Materials and tools

- Sephardi Spaces database and Sephardi world map.
- AI research assistant for comparing routes and generating questions.
- StoryMaps, ArcGIS, or a timeline tool for the final project.
- The class success-criteria worksheet.

Defining success (do this first)

Views of successful migration differ, so teams define the term before they judge. Each team chooses and weights three to five criteria, for example physical safety, economic opportunity, the ability to keep language and religious life, family reunification, and long-term community survival. Explicit criteria keep the final argument defensible rather than arbitrary.

Project sequence (about three to four weeks)

Phase 1, select routes. Each team picks three contrasting routes from the database, for example Salonika to New York, Rhodes to Belgium and the Congo, Iberia to Amsterdam, or Smyrna to Havana,

and maps them.

Phase 2, gather evidence. For each route, collect data on dates, destinations, occupations, languages, and community outcomes using the database and AI assistant.

Phase 3, evaluate. Score each route against the team's weighted criteria and identify the best path, noting the trade-offs behind the choice.

Phase 4, present. Build a StoryMap, timeline, or briefing that argues for the chosen route with map visuals and cited evidence.

Deliverables

- A comparative project (StoryMap, timeline, or briefing) covering at least three routes.
- An explicit, weighted success-criteria rubric created by the team.
- A final recommendation naming the best path with evidence and stated trade-offs.

Assessment

- Rubric focus: quality of evidence, transparency and consistency of the success criteria, handling of trade-offs, and clarity of the argument.
- A well-reasoned defense of a debatable choice scores higher than an unsupported obvious answer.

Differentiation

- **Support:** Provide two pre-selected routes and a starter set of success criteria.
- **Extension:** Add a counterfactual: how might outcomes differ if a community had chosen a different destination?
- **Cross-curricular:** Connect to economics (labor markets) or civics (immigration policy) for added depth.