



The New Immigrants

Objectives

1. Identify the reasons immigration to the United States increased in the late 1800s.
2. Describe the difficulties immigrants faced adjusting to their new lives.
3. Discuss how immigrants assimilated and contributed to American life.
4. Describe efforts to limit immigration.

Prepare to Read

Reading Skill

Use Other Word Origins The English language reflects interactions with cultures from around the world. Some words have been adopted in their original form. Others have changed in spelling or pronunciation but still show the influence of the original language.

Vocabulary Builder

High-Use Words

isolate, p. 627

exclude, p. 629

Key Terms

steerage, p. 626

assimilation, p. 627

anarchist, p. 629

★ **Background Knowledge** The industrial age changed the face of cities with new buildings and bridges. It also changed the population. In this section, you will learn about the millions of people immigrating to the United States during this time.

A Fresh Start

Between 1865 and 1915, some 25 million immigrants entered the United States—more than the population of the entire country in 1850! They were part of a worldwide surge of migration.

Reasons for Migration There were many reasons for this vast migration. In European nations such as Italy, the amount of farmland was shrinking as populations swelled. Machines were replacing farmhands, forcing more people from the land. They looked to the United States as a “land of opportunity” where they could build a better life.

Other immigrants sought religious freedom. In the 1880s, Jews in Russia became targets of government-sponsored pogroms (POH grohmz), or violent attacks against Jews. Armenian Christians faced similar persecution in Turkey.

Finally, political unrest drove many from their native lands. In 1910, a revolution in Mexico pushed tens of thousands of refugees across the Rio Grande.

Jobs pulled immigrants to the United States. Steamship companies and railroads, which profited from immigration, sent agents to Asia and Europe to advertise cheap land and plentiful jobs. The promise of freedom also drew people from lands without traditions of democracy and liberty.

Main Idea

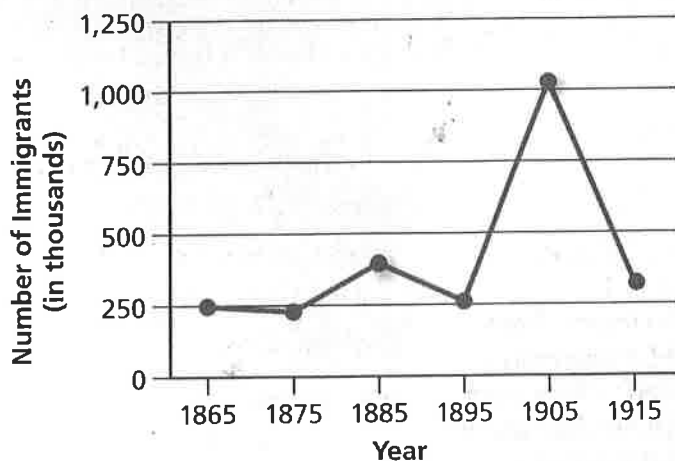
In the late 1800s, a new wave of immigrants came to the United States for economic and political reasons.



Poor
Italian
villager

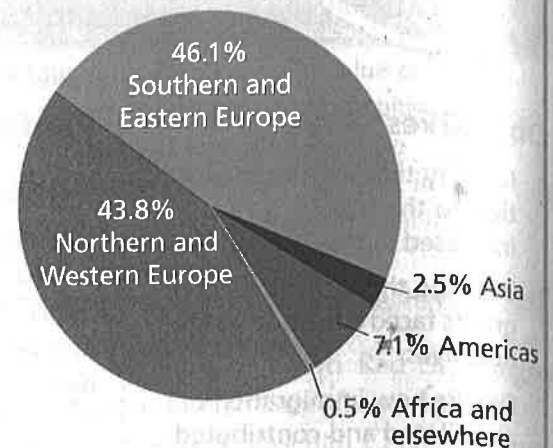
Immigration, 1865–1915

Immigration to the United States, 1865–1915



Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States*

Sources of Emigration, 1865–1915



Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States*

Reading Charts

Skills Activity

The line graph at left shows how immigration increased in the decades after the Civil War. The pie chart on the right shows where these “new immigrants” in the United States came from.

- Read a Graph** Approximately how many immigrants entered the United States in 1875? In 1905?
- Draw Inferences** Based on your reading, how would the pie chart have looked different in the 1830s?

The New Immigrants In the early 1800s, most immigrants were Protestants from northern and western Europe. Many spoke English and had experience in democracy.

By contrast, most of the “new immigrants” who began to arrive in the late 1800s came from nations of southern and eastern Europe, such as Italy, Poland, Russia, and Greece. Most were Catholic or Jewish. A smaller number came from Asia and the Pacific. Few understood English or had experience living in a democracy or in a city.

Checkpoint Why did many people leave their homelands?

Main Idea

Immigrants faced many challenges to settle in the United States.

Starting a New Life

The decision to emigrate was difficult. It meant leaving home, family, and friends and starting a strange life. (For more on the immigrants’ experiences, see the Life at the Time feature in this chapter.)

Coming to America The passage by boat was miserable. Immigrants were crammed below decks in steerage, large compartments that usually held cattle. The tight, airless berths were breeding grounds for disease. Rough seas sickened the travelers.

Most people coming from Europe landed in New York. After 1892, they went to the receiving center on Ellis Island. Asian immigrants entered through Angel Island in San Francisco Bay.

New arrivals faced a rigorous physical examination at the receiving centers. Did they limp? Were their eyes free of disease? Those judged to be disabled or seriously ill might be sent home.

Immigrant Neighborhoods Once admitted to the United States, about two thirds of immigrants settled in cities, near other people from the same country. Ethnic neighborhoods helped people feel less isolated in their new homes.

In immigrant neighborhoods, sidewalks rang with the sounds of Italian, Chinese, Yiddish, and other languages. Newcomers celebrated familiar holidays and cooked foods from the old country, such as kielbasa (Polish sausage) and goulash (Hungarian stew). Italians joined social groups such as the Sons of Italy. Greeks read newspapers in Greek. Small storefronts were turned into Jewish synagogues or Buddhist temples.

Checkpoint What hardships did immigrants face?

Becoming American

Immigrant neighborhoods were springboards to a new life. Organizations called immigrant aid societies helped new arrivals with clothing, housing, and language classes.

Assimilation Newcomers often felt caught between the old world and new. Most clung to traditional modes of worship, family life, and community relations. At the same time, they worked hard to assimilate. **Assimilation** is the process of becoming part of another culture.

Children of immigrants assimilated more rapidly than their parents. Surrounded by English-speakers in school and on the street, they learned the language quickly. They played baseball and dressed like native-born Americans. Immigrant parents felt both pride and pain as they saw their children change.

Vocabulary Builder

isolate (i sah layt) v. to set apart; to separate

Main Idea

For many immigrants, the goal was to become part of American life and culture.

Becoming American

Citizenship classes, like the one shown here, were an important step toward assimilation. **Critical Thinking: Draw Inferences** What subjects do you think students like these might study in citizenship classes?





This man is labeled Russian Anarchist.

This man is labeled Italian Brigand. A brigand is a bandit.

A Nativist View of Immigration

In this 1891 cartoon, the man in the suit tells Uncle Sam that he can get rid of anarchy, crime, and other ills by restricting immigration. **Critical Thinking: Detect Bias** What details create a negative picture of immigrants?

Still, the fondest dream of many immigrants was to educate their children so that the next generation could be better off. One Russian Jewish immigrant called education “the essence of American opportunity, the treasure that no thief could touch . . . surer, safer than bread or shelter.”

Contributions of Immigrants The labor of immigrants was essential to the new American economy. Desperate for money, newcomers took whatever jobs they could find. Immigrants worked in steel mills, meatpacking plants, mines, and garment sweatshops. They helped build subways, skyscrapers, and bridges. Chinese, Irish, and Mexican workers laid down hundreds of miles of railroad track in the West.

Through hard work and saving, many immigrants slowly advanced economically. Often, they began by opening small businesses, such as stores or barbershops, to serve their communities. In time, their customers expanded beyond the neighborhood. Outsiders might bring their clothing to Chinese laundries or buy foods they had never tasted before. In this way, ethnic foods such as spaghetti, chow mein, and bagels became part of American life.

Individual immigrants made major contributions. Andrew Carnegie and Alexander Graham Bell were born in Scotland. Samuel Goldwyn and Louis Mayer, Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, established the motion picture industry in California. Italian-born Arturo Toscanini became a famous orchestra conductor. Belgian immigrant Leo Baekeland invented the first plastic.



Use Other Word Origins

Identify the words in this paragraph that came into English from the Yiddish word *beygl*, meaning “ring or bracelet,” and the Italian word *spago*, meaning “string or cord.”

Checkpoint How did immigrants assimilate?

A New Wave of Nativism

As in the 1840s, increased immigration led to a wave of nativism. Nativists sought to preserve the United States for native-born American citizens.

Nativists argued that the new immigrants would not assimilate because their languages, religions, and customs were too different. They also charged that immigrants took jobs away from Americans. Nativists associated immigrants with violence, crime, and anarchy. An anarchist is a person who opposes all forms of government.

On the West Coast, nativist feelings against Chinese immigrants ran high. Mobs drove Chinese from mining camps and cities and sometimes killed them. In 1882, Congress passed a law to exclude Chinese laborers from the United States. The Chinese Exclusion Act was the first law limiting immigration based on race. It was finally repealed in 1943.

In 1917, Congress passed a law that denied entry to immigrants who could not read their own languages. Since education at the time was usually restricted to the wealthy, this law barred most of the world's poor people from immigrating to the United States.

Checkpoint Why did nativists oppose immigration?

★ **Looking Back and Ahead** Although immigration slowed after 1917, it never stopped. In the 1960s, Congress finally eased restrictions on immigration.

Main Idea

Many Americans distrusted immigrants and called for limits on immigration.

Vocabulary Builder

exclude (ehks KLYOOD) v. to keep out, expel, or reject

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

- (a) List** Why did people immigrate to the United States in the late 1800s?
(b) Frame Questions What five questions could you ask one of those immigrants?
- (a) Describe** How did immigrants try to assimilate?
(b) Detect Bias How did nativists feel about the ability of immigrants to assimilate?

Hungarian words are used because these foods have no English-word counterparts. On your own or with a partner, name foods from other cultures. Do we use the original name or an English word?

Vocabulary Builder

- Complete each of the following sentences so that the second part explains the first part and shows your understanding of the term.
- Many immigrants traveled across the ocean in steerage; _____.
 - Immigrants blended into American life through a process called assimilation; _____.

Writing

- Imagine that you are writing an editorial in which you object to a bill that excludes immigrants who could not read their own languages. Which of the following arguments is most persuasive? Why? **Arguments:**
 - Many native-born American citizens do not know how to read, so the bill uses an unfair standard for immigrants.
 - Immigrants come to this country for a better life, which includes getting an education.
 - The bill is being used as a trick to restrict all immigration.

Reading Skill

- Use Other Word Origins** The text lists *kielbasa* and *goulash*, food items introduced to America by immigrants. The Polish and