

## Immigrants 1870-1920

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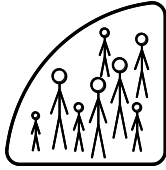
In the years since Europeans first settled North America, about 90 million immigrants have arrived—the largest migration of people in all human history. Some have come to the United States for religious or political reasons, but most have come to work, or to escape problems elsewhere. For example, many Irish people came because of a famine beginning in 1845, caused by a fungus that ruined potatoes.

Until recent years, the greatest period of immigration was from 1870 to 1920. That period provides much data for the study of cultural interaction. In This unit, you'll focus on that period and investigate the question: **How were immigrants to the United States affected by interaction with American culture?**



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## Investigation: Immigrant Demographics



*Select and graph some of the statistics from the table below. Identify the peak periods of immigration from each region. Identify changes in immigration patterns over the period covered by the table. In which period was the impact of immigration likely to have been greatest on American society? Why?*

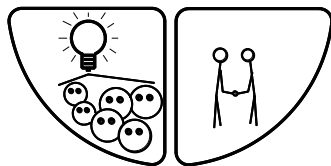
### U.S. Immigration 1820 - 1970

	Northern Europe	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Asia	The Americas	Africa
1821-1830	118,000	40	3,000	10	11,000	20
1831-1840	700,000	650	5,300	45	33,000	50
1841-1850	1,600,000	650	4,700	80	62,000	55
1851-1860	2,400,000	1,620	20,000	41,000	74,000	210
1861-1870	2,014,000	12,300	21,000	65,000	169,000	310
1871-1880	2,038,000	125,000	76,000	124,000	404,000	450
1881-1890	2,778,000	625,000	333,000	68,000	427,000	850
1891-1900	1,600,000	1,207,000	808,000	71,000	39,000	370
1901-1910	1,800,000	3,834,000	2,390,000	244,000	362,000	7,000
1911-1920	950,000	1,863,000	1,506,000	193,000	1,143,000	8,400
1921-1930	1,818,000	575,000	580,000	97,000	1,517,000	6,200
1931-1940	2,015,000	338,000	84,000	15,000	160,000	1,750
1941-1950	491,000	107,000	73,000	32,000	355,000	6,300
1951-1960	931,000	123,000	261,000	153,000	997,000	14,000
1961-1970	588,000	106,000	421,000	478,000	1,716,000	29,000

## Investigation: Immigrant Cultural Differences

Immigrants, of course, weren't all alike. Often, even the immigrants from one country differed in values and attitudes. A farmer and a professor, for example, might have quite different ideas and ways of acting.

The material that follows shows just some immigrant ideas and ways of acting. This should help explain cultural interaction taking place.



*As you analyze the data in this investigation, identify differences between ideas and ways of acting of the immigrants and those of most Americans. Use the categories in your Model for shared ideas and patterns of action as guidelines for investigation.*

In Italy I live in small town—six, seven thousand. It take not much money to live. We pay the rent once a year, only little money. We have fine garden, we live healthy, happy. I obey my mother's word, which is like the God. The people in my town, they are serious, human, good heart. We give everything to the poor. When stranger comes to us, he got always the first chair; we make all we could for him. The stranger can stay a year; he needs no money to pay for anything.

We work little bit, then we take the leisure. We love very much the music, art, poetry. We love the poetical life—poetry today, and tomorrow we take what's coming with the good patience. The way I mean is not only to read the books of the great poets—of Dante that we love more than a father, or Petrarca—but the poetry of the beautiful scenery in the country, the poetry of the music, the poetry of the friendship. Even in the small town we have band and orchestra.

November 11, 1902

Dearest Parents,

Please do not be angry with me for what I shall write. I write you that it is hard to live alone, so please find some girl for me. Be sure she is an honest one, for in America there is not even one single honest Polish girl.

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December 21, 1902

Dearest Parents,

I thank you kindly for your letter, for it was happy. As to the girl, although I don't know her, a friend of mine who does says that she is stately and pretty. I believe him, as well as you, my parents.

Please tell me which of the sisters is to come, the older or the younger one, Aleksandra or Stanislawa.

This statement was made at a Russian conference in 1905:

The people believe that it is the Tsar's responsibility to govern them, and that he has no need of advice from the people. They believe that the Tsar thinks about them all the time, not even sleeping at night out of concern for them. They believe the Tsar should govern alone, for that is not only his right, it is his heavy burden to bear.

Occasionally in the past the Tsar has asked the people's advice, but when he has the people have said, "This is what we think, but do what you believe is best."

I am a son of a Polish peasant farmer. Until ten years of age I did not know the alphabet, or, exactly speaking, I knew only the letter B. Father did not send me to school. He was always repeating: "We have grown old, and we can't read nor write, and we live; so you, my children, will also live without knowledge."

I said to my father that I wanted to learn from a book. And father scolded me, "And who will peel potatoes in the winter, and pasture the geese in summer?" I cried. Once, while peeling potatoes, I escaped from my father and went to an old man who knew not only how to read, but how to write well. I asked him to show me letters in the printer, and he did not refuse. I went home and thought: "It is bad! Father will probably give me a licking." And so it was. Father showered a few strokes on me and said: "Don't you know that, as old people say, he who knows written stuff casts himself into hell?" But I used to steal out to learn more and more frequently.

For the peasant, arson is a way of getting even, and does not bring dishonor in the eyes of one's neighbors.

A peasant whom my father scolded for having set fire to his neighbor's buildings said, "I have set fire to his barn, but he could have and still can set fire to mine." I have listened to the stories of many perfectly respectable farmers who tried to set fire to their enemies' farm buildings.

***From the previous data choose several ideas, attitudes, or values you think differed from those of most Americans in the period from 1870 to 1920.***

- 1. Describe a problem situation which might have been caused by these differences.***
- 2. If you've completed Part 10 of Investigating American History, identify groups (immigrants and others) which may have experienced lowered autonomy, possible causes, and possible responses they may have to their situations.***

The figures on the following chart come from 1870 immigration records, when 387,203 immigrants entered the United States. About half gave inspectors some information about the jobs they had held in their homelands.

***Based on this data, what general statements can you make about the kinds of work these immigrants were prepared to do in America? Where would different kinds of workers be likely to go to live in America?*** (Note that many of those in the “occupation not stated” category were women and children.)

OCCUPATION OF SOME IMMIGRANTS IN 1870			
2,132 Professionals, including		145,782 miscellaneous, including	
232 doctors		1,611 clerks	
531 engineers		35,656 farmers	
285 clergymen		84,577 laborers	
483 teachers		7,073 merchants	
31,964 skilled workmen, including		1,420 sailors	
2,378 blacksmiths		14,261 servants	
4,421 carpenters			
228 cigar makers			
2,190 masons		TOTALS:	
4,763 miners		Professional	2,132
505 seamstresses		Artist	200
1,587 shoemakers		Skilled workman	31,964
1,703 tailors		Miscellaneous	145,782
1,178 weavers		Without occupation	16,529
8,061 mechanics		Occupation not stated	190,596
		<b>Total immigrants</b>	<b>387,203</b>

## Investigation: Responses of Americans to Immigrants

Whenever people with differing ideas and ways of acting come into contact, misunderstanding and resentment almost always occur. It isn't surprising, then, that America had many problems during periods of heavy immigration. The data in this activity reflect attitudes and feelings toward immigrants.

***Read the data, then work with others to identify:***

1. ***American opinions about the effects of immigration***
2. ***Some American ideas about the immigrants themselves.***
3. ***Important: Make sure you've completed Part 10 of Investigating American History. That Part lists the stress responses likely to grow out of limited autonomy—group formation, opinion appeal, and so forth. Identify examples in the data that follow of the people who seem to lack autonomy, and the kinds of responses they are expressing.***

The millions of immigrants pouring into the United States raised the issue of restriction. In 1881 a Bostonian, Hamilton Andrews Hill, took this position at a conference on immigration:

I want to call the attention of the conference to this fact, that the evils which have been pointed out this morning in connection with immigration are but a small part of a great and marvelous movement of population from the Eastern and Western Hemisphere. A large majority of those who come as immigrants are valuable additions to our population and they should be cordially welcomed. They come, many of them, with money and with tools of industry and with honest purposes. They want to be industrious citizens, to take care of themselves and their families, and to add to the national wealth.

It is a mistake to talk as though immigrants were a mass of paupers about to become dependent on us. We must use all the techniques of our Christian civilization in dealing with these people in order to make Christian citizens of them; do not put a stigma upon them by calling them paupers and criminals.

In 1885, a Protestant minister, Reverend Josiah Strong, wrote:

The typical immigrant is a European peasant, whose horizon has been narrow, whose moral and religious training has been little or false, and whose ideas of life are low. Many belong to the pauper and criminal classes. Every detective in New York knows that there is scarcely a ship landing immigrants that does not bring English, French, German, or Italian "crooks."

Moreover, immigration not only furnishes most of our criminals, it is also seriously affecting the morals of the native population. It is disease and not health which is contagious. Most foreigners bring with them European ideas of the Sabbath. The result is sadly plain in all our cities, where Sunday is being changed from a holy day into a holiday. But by far the worst threat to morals is the liquor business, and this is mainly carried on by foreigners. In 1880 63 percent of the traders and dealers in liquors and wines were foreign-born. Seventy-five percent of the brewers were foreign-born, while a large part of the remainder were of foreign parentage. Of saloonkeepers, about 60 percent of these corrupters of youth, whose hand is against every man, were of foreign origin.

We can only glance at the political results of immigration. As we have already seen, it is immigration which has fattened the liquor power; and there is a liquor vote. Immigration is the mother and nurse of American socialism; and there will be a socialist vote. Immigrants go to the cities, and give them their political character. And there is no more serious threat to our civilization, than our rabble-ruled cities.

David Phillips, in *Letters from California* (1877):

Take the 70,000 Chinamen out of California, its industries would be ruined, and the lands, now so productive, would be cultivated without profit. They supply, by their toil, nearly all the vegetables and much of the poultry. They are doing a large share of the farm-work, and build all the railroads and irrigating canals and ditches. They do much of the cooking, and nearly all the washing and ironing. It is said they send the money they save back to China. Why? Because they are not safe, either in person or property, here. Were they protected as citizens are, they would soon own lands, town lots and houses. As it is now, the low, the vile, the idle, brutal hoodlum, in San Francisco, and all other large towns in this State, may attack the Chinaman's house, smash his windows, and break up his furniture and beat him, and he is—only a Chinaman.

Words of a song published in California in 1877:

### **Twelve Hundred More**

O workingmen dear, and did you hear  
The news that's goin' round?  
Another China steamer  
Has been landed here in town.  
Today I read the papers,  
And it grieved my heart full sore  
To see upon the title page,  
O, just "Twelve Hundred More!"  
O, California's coming down,  
As you can plainly see.  
They are hiring all the Chinamen  
and discharging you and me;  
But strife will be in every town  
Throughout the Pacific shore,  
And the cry of old and young shall be,  
"O, damn, 'Twelve Hundred More'"  
They run their steamer in at night  
Upon our lovely bay;

If 'twas a free and honest trade,  
They'd land it in the day.  
They come here by the hundreds-  
The country is overrun-  
And go to work at any price-  
By then the labor's done.  
Twelve hundred honest laboring men  
Thrown out of work today  
By the landing of these Chinamen  
In San Francisco Bay. . . .  
This state of things can never last  
In this our golden land,  
For soon you'll hear the avenging cry,  
"Drive out the China man!"  
And then we'll have the stirring times  
We had in days of yore,  
And the devil take those dirty words  
They call "Twelve Hundred More!"

Statements made in 1922 by Kenneth L. Roberts:

Races cannot be crossbred without mongrelization, any more than breeds of dogs can be crossbred without mongrelization. The American nation was founded and developed by the Nordic race, but if a few more million members of the Alpine, Mediterranean, and Semitic races are poured among us, the result will be a race of people as worthless as good-for-nothing mongrels.

A mongrelized race of people cannot produce great artists or statesmen or poets or sculptors or explorers or warriors. The government of a mongrelized race becomes corrupt, its art and literature become childish and silly, the courts and judges become unfair, and its public and private morals go bad. All that is left are tricky and cunning traders and people who think they are better than they really are. These facts should be interesting to American citizens. So many millions of non-Nordic aliens have poured into this country since 1880 that several of our largest cities have more foreign-born and children of foreign-born than native Americans.

Unless this is stopped immediately, mongrelization is inevitable. Many of our largest cities are beginning to show the effects of mongrelization. Some Americans think that only snobs believe in racial purity, but race purity is essential for the well-being of our children. Only if our race remains pure can we keep the things that made America great.

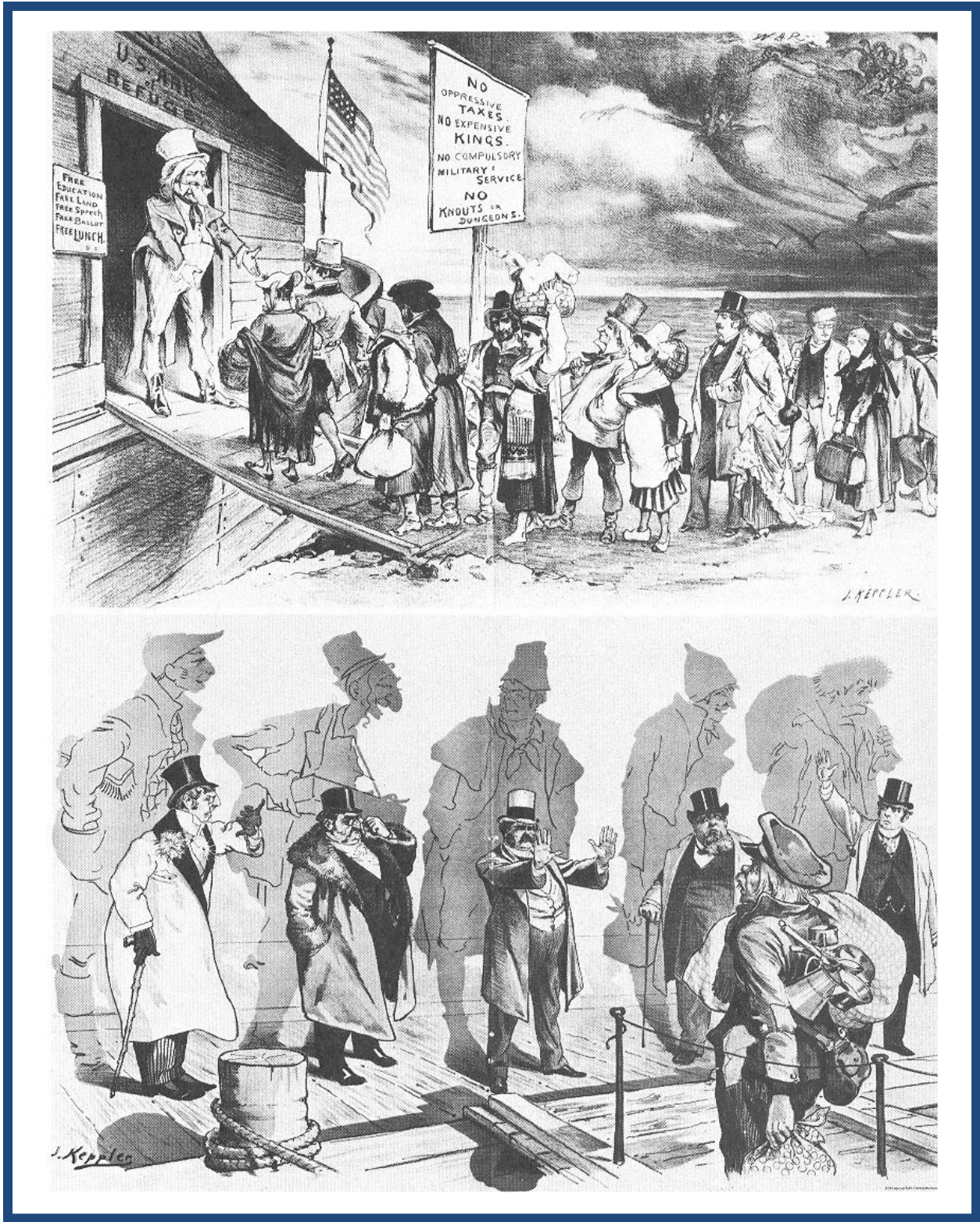
From the San Francisco magazine *The Wave*, December 1899:

As far as the East is from the West, so far is that silent, obstinate Chinese sub-civilization we cherish in our midst from our Caucasian civilization. We have met many peoples on our spread eastward and westward, and rubbed up against many ideals, but of them all, the Chinese is the one farthest removed from our ideas. We have had Chinatown in our midst some fifty years. We have policed it and missionaried it; we have tried, by every endeavor to extend to it the "blessings" of Occidental ideas. A good third of our Chinese have never seen China, being born in California, and most of the rest have their sole business connection in San Francisco, and yet hardly one of them has accepted what we have to give. They go their own way, live in their own fashion, are governed by their own laws and laugh ours to scorn. Pass one of them on the street, and he turns out for you without a glance, as he would turn out for a post.

***What emotions might be motivating people that express racism and prejudice? How might these emotions be related to loss or lack of autonomy?***



Both of the cartoons below were drawn by the same artist, the upper one in 1880, the lower in 1893:



For many years each state made its own laws about admitting immigrants. In 1882, however, Congress began to take control. Some important regulatory laws are described below. *Use this data to answer the questions that follow.*

## **Restrictions on Immigration**

### **Immigration Act 1882**

Imposed a 50 cent head tax on entering immigrants

Excluded criminals, paupers, and the insane.

### **Chinese Exclusion Act 1882**

Excluded Chinese immigrants to the U.S. for 10 years. This act was made permanent in 1904, but cancelled after World War II.

### **Gentlemen's Agreement 1907**

Japan voluntarily agreed to limit the immigration of Japanese laborers to the U.S. by refusing to give applicants a passport.

### **Literacy Text Act 1917**

Immigrants over 16 years of old were required to read and write one foreign language (The physically handicapped were exempt from this requirement.)

### **Emergency Quota Act 1921**

Established the first immigration quota; set a yearly ceiling of about 357,000 newly entering immigrants from outside the Western Hemisphere

Restricted the number of new immigrants to 3% of the number of foreign-born persons of that country in the U.S. in 1910.

### **Johnson-Reed Act 1924**

Set a yearly ceiling of about 160,000 newly entering immigrants from outside the western hemisphere.

Restricted the number of entering immigrants to 2% of foreign-born persons of that country in the U.S. in 1890.

### **National Origins Act 1929**

Set a yearly ceiling of about 150,000 newly entering immigrants from outside the western hemisphere

Based origins quota on foreign-born population in the U.S. in 1920.

Said no one country could have a quota of less than 100.

### Effects of the Quota Laws:

	Immigrants from Northern and western Europe	Immigrants from all other countries (mainly from southern and eastern Europe)
Average inflow of immigrants each year, 1907-1914:	117,000	714,000
Quotas under the Act of 1921:	204,365	152,660
Quotas under the Act of 1924:	144,131	21,536
Quotas under the Act of 1929:	128,660	25,854

*The laws passed by Congress usually reflect the attitudes of a majority of the people in the United States. What attitudes toward immigrants are indicated by the immigration laws? What kinds of people are favored by the laws?*

*What effect do you think each of the following might have on American attitudes toward immigrants? Explain.*

- *More available jobs than workers*
- *More available workers than jobs*
- *Surplus undeveloped land in the West*
- *Most immigrants of Protestant religion*
- *Most immigrants Catholic or Jewish*

*In your opinion, which American objections to immigrants were reasonable? Which were based on racism and prejudice?*

NOTE: Many additional immigration laws and changes to existing laws have been enacted since 1929; additional changes are likely. See:

[How U.S. immigration laws and rules have changed through history | Pew Research Center](#)

## Investigation: Immigrant Problems

For most immigrants, coming to America presented major problems. Arrangements had to be made for someone else to take over family responsibilities, separating from friends and family was difficult, and leaving for an unknown place was surely a little frightening. The trip to a port, the wait for a ship, and the ocean crossing could take weeks or even months, and could also be very expensive.

Most immigrants' problems didn't end with arrival in America. **Analyze the following data. Identify the many different kinds of problems immigrants faced. If you've completed Part 10 of Investigating American History, identify the ways that the person's autonomy is being affected by the problem.**

After two days of being a guest, I was politely given to understand that it was time for me to enter the race for American dollars. For the rest of that week and all through the next I went out looking for work. Early in the morning I would get one of the children to translate the "Help Wanted" advertisements for me. When I glanced at the length and number of those columns, I saw that I would soon be rich. There were hundreds of shops and factories and offices, it seemed, that wanted my help. They literally begged me to come. They promised me high wages and fine working conditions.

And then I would go and blunder around for hours, trying to find where they were, stand in line with a hundred other applicants, approach timidly when my turn came, and be passed up with a long look at my appearance.

Somehow, I was always refused. Why? At last one morning, a butcher in the upper Eighties in Manhattan gave me the answer. I had got there before anyone else, and when I saw that he was going to pass me up, I got up all my courage and asked him the reason. He looked me over from head to foot, and then, with scornful glance at my shabby foreign shoes he asked me if I thought he wanted a "greenhorn" working in his store.

I thought about that for a long time. Here indeed was a new light on America. Her road to success was a vicious circle. In order to get a job I needed American clothes, and the only way to afford American clothes was to get a job.

A former sailor described his first job in America:

One morning Louis and I were standing with some other men on the sidewalk, and a fat man came toward us. "Good morning, *padrone*," said one of the men.

"*Padrone?*" said I to myself. Now the word *padrone* in Italy is used only about a man of some importance. This man not only showed no signs of good breeding, he was unshaven and dirty and his clothes were shabby. I could not understand why he would be called *padrone*. However, I said nothing, because I wanted to be polite when I was in American society.

The *padrone* began to describe in glowing words the advantage of a certain job: "It is not very far, only 12 miles from Boston. For a few cents you can come back any time you wish to see your friends and relatives. The company has a 'shantee' in which you can sleep, and a 'storo' where you can buy your 'grosserie' very cheap. Good pay," he continued, "\$1.25 per day, and you only have to pay me 50 cents a week for getting you this good job. I only do it to help you and because you are my countrymen. If you come back here at six o'clock tonight, I will take you out."

The generosity of this man impressed Louis and me very much. We decided we would go, so at six o'clock we returned to the very spot. About 20 men were there and we were led to North Station. We took a train to some suburban place I've never learned the name of.

On reaching our destination we were taken to the shanty and shown two long shelves filled with straw. These were our beds. The store of which we had been told was at one end of the shanty. The next morning we were taken out to work.

It was a warm autumn day. The pick seemed to grow heavier with every stroke and the shovel wider and longer. The second day was no better than the first, and the third was worse than the second. It was especially hard for Louis and me, for we had never been farm workers like the rest. The *padrone*, whose generosity had so impressed us was little better than a brute. We began to do some simple figuring and discovered that when we had paid for our groceries at the store, for the privilege of sleeping in the shanty, and the 50 cents to the *padrone* for having been so kind as to hire us, we would have nothing at the end of the week but sore arms and backs. On the afternoon of the third day, Louis and I had a meeting and decided to part company with picks and shovels forever. We left, without receiving a cent of pay, of course.

This letter appeared in the *Jewish Daily Forward*, a New York newspaper:

Dear Mr. Editor,

I was born in a small town in Russia, and until I was 16 I studied in Hebrew schools, but when I came to America I changed quickly. I was influenced by the progressive newspapers and the literature. I developed spiritually and became a free-thinker. I meet with free-thinking, progressive people, I feel comfortable in their company, and I agree with their convictions.

But the nature of my feelings is remarkable. Listen to me: Every year when the month of *Elul* rolls around, when the time of *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* approaches, my heart grows heavy and sad. A melancholy descends on me, a longing gnaws at my breast. At that time I cannot rest, I wander about through the streets, lost in thought, depressed.

Your reader, S. R.

A young immigrant girl wrote to her aunt in Europe:

Dear Auntie:

I received your letter on February 20 and I write you on February 25. Dear auntie, I inform you that I am in the same place working for an English-speaking master and mistress who don't know a word of Polish, and I don't know English; so we communicate with gestures and I know what to do, that's all. I know the work and therefore I don't mind much about the language. But, dear auntie, I went intentionally into an English household in order that I may learn to speak English, because it is necessary in America. I am in good health, only I am a little ill with my feet. I don't know what it is, whether rheumatism or something else. I walk very much, because from six o'clock in the morning till ten o'clock in the evening I have work and I receive 22 dollars a month, and I have seven persons, and 16 rooms to clean, and I cook. Everything is on my head.

O dear auntie, I write you that I have nothing to write, only I ask you for a quick answer. I wish you a merry holiday of Easter time. O dear God, why cannot I be with my auntie and divide the egg together with parents and brothers and sisters! When I think about all this, I would not be sorry if I had to die right now.

***Which of the problems you've identified do you think are usually present when unlike cultures come in contact?***

***Page 64 of Investigating American History has a graph showing economic conditions. Identify possible relationships between these conditions and attitudes toward immigrants.***

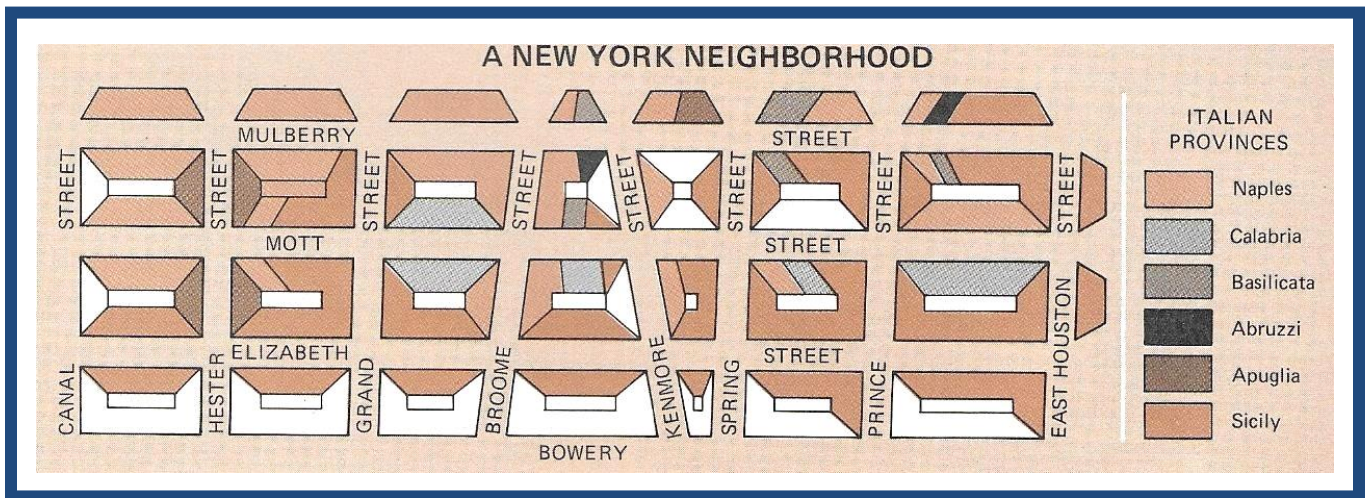
**Keywords for further investigation:** Ellis Island, Central Pacific Railroad, Statue of Liberty, Irish Potato Famine, Japanese-American Internment.

## Investigation: Immigrant Responses to Problems

By 1900 state commissions and charities had begun to aid immigrants in some matters, but in general there was little organized effort to help newcomers settle in the United States. Most had to solve the problems of daily life by themselves. The following material provides information about some of the ways immigrants coped.

*As you study the data, identify actions you think helped immigrants solve some of their problems, and the possible effects of these actions on the immigrants. If you've completed Part 10 of Investigating American History, identify situations in which autonomy is lacking, and the kind of response being made.*

Origin of occupants of apartments in New York City, early 1900's:



Rose Cohen, from a Jewish immigrant family, described her father's actions:

I found that father was already at home. As I came into the room I saw him resting against the wall, clipping his beard. I was so surprised and shocked to see him actually do this thing that I could neither speak nor move for some minutes. And I knew that he, too, felt embarrassed. After the first glance I kept my eyes steadily on the floor in front of me, and began to talk to him quietly, but with great earnestness: "You had been so religious in the old country, father," I said, "more religious than anyone else in our whole neighborhood. And now you are cutting your beard. Grandmother would never have believed it. How she would weep!" The snipping of the scissors still went on. But I knew by the sound that now he was only making a pretense at cutting. At last he laid it down and said in a tone that was bitter yet quiet: "They do not like Jews on Cherry Street."

A list of the organizations connected with one Catholic Church parish in a Chicago neighborhood settled by Polish immigrants:

Zuaves of St. Stanislaw Kostka; Society of the Virgins of the Holy Rosary; Brotherhood of the Young Men of St. Joseph; Citizens' Club of Thaddeus Kosciuszko; Theater and Dramatic Club; the Parochial School; the Parish Committee; the Association of Altar Boys; the Marshals of the Upper Church; the Marshals of the Lower Church; the Arch-sorority of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (two groups); the Women of the Holy Rosary (four groups); the Arch-brotherhood of the Saints; the Third Order of St. Francis; the Choirs of the Upper Church; the Choirs of the Lower Church; the Club of Ladies of Queen Labrowska; the Society of the Alumni of the Parish School; the Musical and Literary Society of Leo XIII; the Needlework Club of St. Rose of Lima; the Polish Roman Catholic Union (central office), plus 20 additional affiliates of the Roman Catholic Union; the Polish Alma Mater (central office), plus six additional affiliates of the Alma Mater; the Court of Pulaski (No. 482 of the Union of Catholic Foresters), plus nine additional units of the Catholic Foresters; the Society of the Guardianship of St. Joseph (Group 115 of the Polish Association in America), plus six additional units of the Polish Association; the Society of Young Men of St. Kazimierz (Independent Mutual Help Association); the Society of Ladies of Queen Jadwiga (Mutual Help Association); the Loan and Savings Association of St. Joseph No. 3; the Building Loan and Savings Association of Pulaski; the Building Loan and Savings Association of St. Francis; the Press Committee; the College of St. Stanislaw Kostka; the Novice's Convent of the Resurrectionists; the Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis; the Chicago *Daily News* (Polish).

**Note:** For more primary data, check the Internet: The Library of Congress, American Memory section.

In 1876, Mary Cone, from Ohio, published *Two Years in California*. She described Chinese living in San Francisco:

There are six Chinese companies in San Francisco, each having its own organization, its own officers, and its own place of meeting. These are in some sense mutual aid societies. Chinamen can do as they please about joining them, but so great are the advantages of doing so that almost every one connects himself with one or another. The initiation fee is from five to ten dollars. There are some incidental expenses, so that the entire cost of membership for ten years is from fifty to one hundred dollars. A member may dissolve his connection with the company to which he belongs at his pleasure. In return for what the member pays, the company take care of him if sick, rescue him, if possible, when in danger, and feed him when he is out of employment. No matter where he goes, or how far away, his company is still bound to care for him. If he is oppressed or wronged in any way, and makes complaint, he must be looked after and his wrongs righted. When a member wishes to return to China, a certain number of days before he expects to start he must report himself to the company to which he belongs and state his intention. The books of the company are searched to see if he owes any man anything; notice is also sent to the other companies to learn if there is anything against him on their records, and he must have a clearance before he can leave the country. It is the custom, therefore, if a Chinaman owes a debt, and there is any difficulty in collecting it, to send notice to the company of which he is a member, who see that he pays it, at least before he leaves the State. Each company has a hospital for the benefit of its members, and some of them have temples for religious service.

Note: Chinese “Tong” companies later developed reputations different from that depicted here. See [http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=The Tongs of Chinatown](http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=The_Tongs_of_Chinatown)



Experiences of a young Italian immigrant, who came to the U.S. in 1902:

We went one day to Newark and got work on the street. We paid a man five dollars each for getting us the work and we were with that boss for six months. He was Irish, but a good man and he gave us our money every Saturday night. When the work was done we each had nearly 200 dollars saved. Plenty of the men spoke English and they taught us, and we taught them to read and write.

We got up at half-past five o'clock every morning, and had a breakfast of bread and cheese, onions, garlic, and red herrings. We went to work at seven o'clock and in the middle of the day we had soup and bread in a place where we got it for two cents a plate. In the evenings we had a good dinner with meat of some kind and potatoes. We got from the butcher the meat that other people would not buy because they said it was old, but they don't know what is good.

When the Newark boss told us that there was no more work, Francesco and I talked about what we would do and we went back to Brooklyn to a saloon near Hamilton Ferry where we got a job cleaning it out and slept in a little room upstairs. There was a bootblack named Michael on the corner and when I had time I helped him and learned the business. Francesco cooked the lunch in the saloon and he, too, worked for the bootblack and we were soon able to make the best polish.

Then we thought we would go into business and we got a basement on Hamilton Avenue, near the Ferry, and put four chairs in it. We paid 75 dollars for the chairs and all the other things. Outside we had a big sign that said:

#### THE BEST SHINE FOR TEN CENTS

Men that did not want to pay ten cents could get a good shine for five cents, but it was not an oil shine. We had two boys helping us and paid each of them 50 cents a day. The rent of the place was 20 dollars a month, so the expenses were very great, but we made money from the beginning. We slept in the basement, but got our meals in the saloon till we could put a stove in our place, and then Francesco cooked for us all. That would not do, though, because some of our customers said that they did not like to smell garlic and onions and red herrings. I thought that was strange, but we had to do what the customers said.

We had said that when we saved 1,000 dollars each we would go back to Italy and buy a farm, but now that the time is coming we are so busy and making so much more money that we think we will stay. We have opened another parlor near South Ferry.

We have joined a club and have much pleasure in the evenings. We meet many people and are learning new things all the time. We were very ignorant when we came here, but now we have learned much.

(Continued)

On Sundays we get a horse and carriage from the grocer and go down to Coney Island. We go to the theaters often, and other evenings we go to the houses of our friends and play cards.

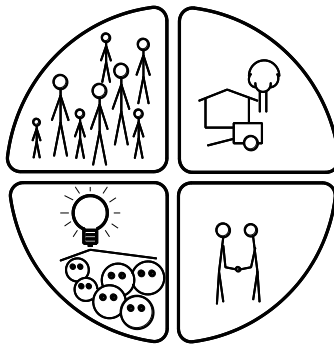
I am now 19 years of age and have 700 dollars saved. Francesco is 21 and has about 900 dollars. We shall open some more parlors soon. I know an Italian who was a bootblack ten years ago and now bosses bootblacks all over the city. He has so much money that if it was turned into gold it would weigh more than himself.

Francesco and I have a room to ourselves and some people call us "swells." Francesco bought a gold watch with a gold chain as thick as his thumb. He is a very handsome fellow and I think he likes a young lady that he met at a picnic out at Ridgewood.

I often think of Ciguciano and Teresa. He is a good man, one in a thousand, and she was very beautiful. Maybe I shall write to them about coming to this country.

## Follow-Up: Ethnicity Here and Now

1. *Identify the immigrant society that's most important to you.*
2. *Use the Model categories to gather information about the present-day culture (ethnicity) of people who originated with the immigrant group you've identified.*
3. *Summarize the present-day differences between people with origins in this immigrant group, and the culture of the majority of American people.*



## Acknowledgements/Sources:

**Page 3t:** Emily F. Robbins, "If One Speak Bad of Your Mother, How You Feel?," *Red Cross Magazine*, September 1919. **3c:** Thomas and Znaniecki, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971) v. ii, P 259.. **4t:** N. M. Pavlov, *Stenographic Report of the Peterhof Conference*, 1905 **4c:** Thomas and Znaniecki, op. cit. v. iv, p. 119. **4b:** Thomas and Znaniecki, op. cit. v. iv, p. 119 **6t:** F. B. Sanborn, ed, *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Conference of Charities and Correction*, 1881. **6b:** Josiah Strong, *Our Country*, 1891. **7t:** David Phillips, *Letters from California*, 1877, pp. 134-135. Internet: Library of Congress Learning Page, Rise of Industrial America, 1876-1900, Chinese Immigration to the United States. **7b:** *The Blue and Grey Songster*, 1877. **8t:** Kenneth L. Roberts, *Why Europe Leaves Home* (Indianapolis, Ind. The Bobbs Merrill Co, Inc., 1949,) p. 113-114, originally published 1922. **8b:** *The Wave*, v. 20, July-Dec. 1899: no. 30, page 4: Highbinders and Tong Wars **12:** Abridged and adapted from pp 91-92 in *An American in the Making* by M. E. Ravage. Copyright 1917 by Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. **13:** Constantine M. Panunzio, *The Soul of an Immigrant* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), pp. 79-80 **14b:** Thomas and Znaniecki, op. cit. v. iv pp. 254-255. **16b:** Mary Cone, *Two Years in California*, 1876, p. 187. Internet: Library of Congress Learning Page, Rise of Industrial America, 1876-1900, Chinese Immigration to the United States. **17-18:** "Autobiography of a Bootblack," *Independent Magazine*, Vol. 54.

## Notes for teachers and mentors:

**(October 2016)** Over the past three years or so, this unit has been downloaded thousands of times—far more often than any other document posted at [www.marionbrady.com](http://www.marionbrady.com). We're not sure why this is occurring, and are somewhat concerned that learners attempting to use this unit without the conceptual foundation provided by earlier study of the systems-based Model cannot adequately process the sources.

**(September 2018)** Another recent concern: Selective perception is a powerful filter, and those with a mindset of negative feelings about immigrants can find evidence in this unit that they might think would justify their feelings. Units in this course of study on the subject of autonomy make this point: when many people feel insecure about their futures, they look for someone to blame, and immigrants become scapegoats. Right now, these exclusionist/nationalist feelings seem particularly strong among a minority of U.S. citizens. We hope this is NOT the reason for the many times this unit is being downloaded. It's trite but true to point out that the United States is a nation of immigrants. The supposed threat to American society by those, documented and undocumented, who are recent arrivals is being exaggerated by some to a level that is irrational. In our opinion, these recent immigrants are not a credible threat.

We'd appreciate feedback about your thoughts or experiences relating to this (or any other) unit. <http://www.marionbrady.com/ContactingUs.asp>

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In conceptual and historical sequence, this unit follows Part 10 of *Investigating American History*. See <https://www.marionbrady.com/AHH.asp>. It provides opportunity to apply both the Model and the principles associated with thwarted autonomy.

Facing problems such as finding employment and assimilation, immigrants rather naturally turned to others like them for mutual support, moving into a neighborhood of people with the same area of origin, and forming groups such as Chinese mutual-aid

groups, or the many organizations associated with a Polish Catholic Church. The idea that the United States is a “melting pot” is an oversimplification of a complex reality.

We’ve included racist views, such as those on page 8, with some trepidation. These quotes are included to show the history of the time—and racism was part of that history. However, we’ve seen how some people can take evidence like this, and use it as weapons against people who publish educational materials, trying to indicate that those who include the quotations share the racist views they quote. The white supremacist view expressed by Kenneth L. Roberts, for example, was and is abhorrent to us.

The “standard” shared values and action patterns of Americans generally operate without being thought about much by most members of our society, until they come into contrast with those of people from another society. This unit provides that opportunity to not only figure out the cultural characteristics of people from elsewhere, but also, by seeing differences, to figure out the characteristics of our own society and culture. A worthy additional activity would be to encourage learners to begin generating a list of those “standard” shared ideas and action patterns.

See the discussion of dominant shared ideas of Americans in Appendix B of *Investigating American History, TE*. That description of shared ideas is intended as an objective look at those ideas, NOT a suggestion that those ideas are “right” and immigrant ideas that contrast with them are “wrong.” Some of our shared Western and American ideas have had, and continue to have negative consequences for our society, so an understanding of them should be an essential part of education for citizenship.

(Updates and changes 11/20/2016, 9/10-22/2018 HLB)