

Immigration During the Gilded Age Document Analysis

Directions: Read/analyze each document and answer the question(s) that follows. Then highlight the information in the document that helped you answer each question.

Document 1:

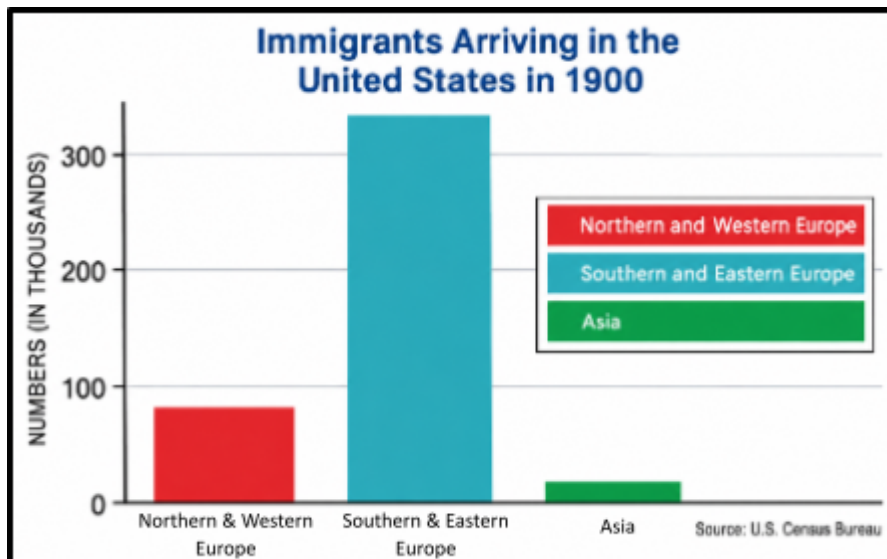
Source: *National Geographic. America Through the Lens, 1877 to the Present. 2019.*

Until the early 1870s, most immigrants to the United States were from northern and western Europe. But between 1890 and 1920, immigrants began to arrive from southern and eastern European countries such as Italy, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Czechoslovakia. Unlike many of their predecessors, few of these new immigrants were Protestant Christians, but instead were largely Catholic, Jewish, and Orthodox. They also typically did not speak English. Although seeking a better life, just as those who arrived before them, they were often treated with prejudice.

Like earlier groups of immigrants to the United States, southern and eastern European and Asian immigrants were motivated by several push-pull factors, or pressures that forced them from their home countries and drew them to a new one. The factors that pushed immigrants away from their home countries included a lack of economic opportunities, a shortage of farmland, too few educational opportunities, religious discrimination, and the threat of being drafted to fight in wars. For the Irish, the massive emigration that began with the Great Potato Famine of 1845–1849 stretched into the latter half of the century, as hunger and poverty continued to plague Ireland.

The pull factors that drew immigrants to the United States included the hope for greater economic opportunity, plentiful farmland available for purchase at affordable prices, political and religious freedom, and the absence of war. Following the Civil War, rapid industrial growth created an unprecedented demand for labor. Industries across the country needed both skilled and unskilled workers. Communities established by previous groups of immigrants in cities such as Chicago and New York welcomed the newcomers.

1. During the gilded age, what were the main push factors that caused immigrants to leave their home countries?
2. What are the main pull factors drew immigrants to the United States?

**Document 2:**

Source: *National Geographic. America Through the Lens, 1877 to the Present. 2019.*

3. Using the chart, where were most immigrants coming to the United States arriving from?

Document 3:

Source: *National Geographic. America Through the Lens, 1877 to the Present. 2019.*

Many factors contributed to American urbanization. The ever-growing number of immigrants—more than 8 million between 1870 and 1890 alone—generally settled in the cities where they arrived. Increased industrialization and trade played a role as well. Cities offered much needed jobs and exciting opportunities for people to meet others, enjoy cultural events, and live independent lives.

4. Where did most immigrants live when they migrated to the United States? Why?

Document 4:

Source 1: *National Geographic. America Through the Lens, 1877 to the Present. 2019.*

Source 2: Smithsonian Magazine, Immigration and American Politics, 2017.

Source 1: The growing density of urban populations during the late 19th century caused great concern among both public health officials and social reformers. Before 1895, effective departments of sanitation, or proper waste disposal and a system for providing clean water, did not exist in cities. Horse manure and garbage accumulated in the streets, while noxious factory smoke filled the air. Such unsanitary conditions made poor sections of cities particularly susceptible to outbreaks of illnesses such as cholera, a deadly disease that people sometimes contract after drinking contaminated water. Crowded conditions increased the amount of damage caused by fires and the likelihood of violent and criminal acts.

Source 2: Much of the urban poor, including a majority of incoming immigrants, lived in tenement housing. Because of the massive overcrowding, disease was widespread. CHOLERA and YELLOW-FEVER epidemics swept through the slums on a regular basis. TUBERCULOSIS was a huge killer. Infants suffered the most. Almost 25% of babies born in late-19th century cities died before reaching the age of one. The cities stank. The air stank, the rivers stank, the people stank. Although public sewers were improving, disposing of human waste was increasingly a problem. People used private cesspools, which overflowed with a long, hard rain. Old sewage pipes dumped the waste directly into the rivers or bays. These rivers were often the very same used as water sources.

5. Describe the hazards of tenement housing.

6. Despite these conditions, why do you think immigrants continued to migrate to American cities by the millions?

Document 5:

Source: Smithsonian Magazine, Immigration and American Politics, 2017.

There were rules about joining the nativist secret society the ORDER OF THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER. Requirements for membership: the memorization of passwords and hand sign, a solemn pledge never to betray the order, a pure-blooded pedigree of PROTESTANT ANGLO-SAXON stock and the rejection of all Catholics. And above all, members of the secret society weren't allowed to talk about the secret society. If asked anything by outsiders, they would respond with, "I know nothing."

So went the rules of this secret fraternity that rose to prominence in 1853 and transformed into the powerful political party known as the KNOW NOTHINGS. At its height in the 1850s, the Know Nothing party, originally called the American Party, included more than 100 elected congressmen, eight governors, a controlling share of half-a-dozen state legislatures and thousands of local politicians. The party, like other nativists, saw more immigrants coming to the United States as increasing competition for resources and land. Party members supported deportation of foreign "beggars and criminals"; a 21-year NATURALIZATION PERIOD for immigrants; mandatory Bible reading in schools; and the elimination of all Catholics from public office. They wanted to restore their vision of what America should look like with TEMPERANCE, Protestantism, self-reliance, with American nationality and work ethic enshrined as the nation's highest values. Know Nothings were the American's first major THIRD PARTY.

7. How did the Know Nothing Party get its name?

8. During the Gilded Age, why were nativists concerned with people migrating to the United States?

Document 6:

Source: Smithsonian Magazine, Immigration and American Politics, 2017.

In the 1850s, Chinese workers migrated to the United States, first to work in the GOLD MINES, but also to take agricultural jobs, and factory work, especially in the garment industry. Chinese immigrants were particularly instrumental in building railroads in the American west, and as Chinese laborers grew successful in the United States, a number of them became ENTREPRENEURS in their own right. As the numbers of Chinese laborers increased, so did the strength of anti-Chinese sentiment among other workers in the American economy who felt Chinese immigrants' success was to the detriment of their own success. This finally resulted in legislation that aimed to limit future immigration of Chinese workers to the United States.

In the spring of 1882, the CHINESE EXCLUSION Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur. This act provided an absolute 10-year moratorium on Chinese labor immigration. For the first time, Federal law proscribed entry of an ethnic working group on the premise that it "endangered the good order" of certain localities. THE KEARNEYITES in San Francisco even went so far as to cut off the ponytails of Chinese laborers as an act of nativist racial violence. The Chinese Exclusion Act required the few non-laborers who sought entry to obtain certification from the Chinese government that they were qualified to immigrate. But this group found it increasingly difficult to prove that they were not laborers because the 1882 act defined excludables as "skilled and unskilled laborers and Chinese employed in mining." Thus, very few Chinese could enter the country under the 1882 law.

The 1882 exclusion act also placed new requirements on Chinese who had already entered the country. If they left the United States, they had to obtain certifications to re-enter. Congress, moreover, refused State and Federal courts the right to grant citizenship to Chinese immigrants, although these courts could still deport them.

9. What type of jobs did Chinese immigrants typically work when they migrated to the United States?

10. What did the Chinese Exclusion Act passed in 1882 do?