

Summary: Moving to the United States

Arriving in America

Before 1880, most immigrants living in America came from countries in northern or western Europe. Between 1880 and 1924, about 25 million new immigrants came to the United States. Many came from countries in southern or eastern Europe such as Italy, Russia, Hungary, Greece, and Poland. Some immigrants came looking for jobs. Others were escaping war or persecution. Most immigrants found greater political freedom in the United States. Arriving immigrants had to pass through immigration stations such as Ellis Island in New York Harbor and Angel Island in San Francisco Bay. Government officials asked immigrants about their plans. They were checked for diseases. Many immigrants from China came to the West Coast. Asian immigrants faced more prejudice than European immigrants. More Chinese immigrants were turned away and sent back to China.

Living in a New Country

Immigrants often lived in large cities. Immigrants had their own languages, religions, and customs. They lived in neighborhoods with family or friends that belonged to their ethnic group. Life was hard for immigrants. Many lived in tenements. Many immigrants worked in dangerous factories. Businesses liked to hire immigrants because they worked many hours and were not paid a lot of money. Some Americans worried that immigrants would take their jobs. They did not want immigrants to speak other languages or follow other customs. Immigrants faced prejudice from some Americans. In 1921 and 1924, Congress limited the number of immigrants that could come to the United States.

Immigrants helped to make the United States one of the richest, fastest-growing countries in the world. Immigrants built railroads, dug mines, and worked in factories.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

persecution *noun*, unfair treatment or punishment

ethnic group *noun*, a group of people who share a culture or language

tenement *noun*, a poorly built apartment building



After You Read

REVIEW In what ways were Asian immigrants treated differently than immigrants from Europe?

Underline two sentences that tell how immigrants from Asia were treated.

REVIEW What did immigrants do to help the United States grow?

Highlight the sentence that tells how immigrants helped build the United States.