

Summary: Big Cities

Moving to Cities

Many people moved to cities in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Many immigrants lived in cities. People who lived on farms also moved to the city. Machines were used on many farms. Fewer workers were needed. People moved to cities to find jobs. Cities grew very fast. Urbanization was taking place in some cities. By 1920, over half of all Americans lived in a city.

Chicago was a city that grew quickly. It was in a good place. Chicago is near Lake Michigan. Canals linked Chicago to the Mississippi and Illinois rivers. Railroads and boats brought natural resources to the city. Logs were shipped to factories. Machines cut the logs into lumber. Wheat and corn were also shipped to Chicago. Mills turned them into food. Cows and pigs were sent to stockyards.

Changes in Cities

Cities changed as they got bigger. Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla were inventors. They invented new ways to make electricity and send it through wires. New inventions needed electricity for power. Theater stages were lit with electric lights. Stores used electric signs to attract shoppers. Electricity powered the rapid transit system. Streetcars and subways moved people around the city quickly.

Growing cities had problems. Cities became crowded and noisy. There was not enough housing. People lived in slums. City people, especially immigrants, helped each other find housing and jobs. Reformers wanted city life to be better. In 1889, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr started Hull House. This was a new settlement house in Chicago. People came to Hull House to learn English. They got medical care and looked for jobs. Hull House had clubs for children. Reformers in other cities built settlement houses.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

urbanization *noun*, the growth of cities

rapid transit *noun*, a system of trains used to move people around cities

slum *noun*, a poor, crowded part of a city

Hull House *noun*, one of the first settlement houses in the United States

settlement house *noun*, a community center for people in cities



After You Read

REVIEW Why did so many people move to cities in the late 1800s and early 1900s? Circle the sentence that tells what people were looking for in cities.

REVIEW What kinds of help did immigrants find in settlement houses? Underline the sentences that say why people went to Hull House.