

Summary: Immigrants and Reformers

German and Irish Immigrants

Millions of Europeans came to the United States in the mid-1800s. Almost half were Irish and about one-third were German. Thousands of Germans left Europe because of crop failures and war. Many settled in the Midwest of the United States. Germans with money, education, and skills bought land to farm. Others worked in Chicago, St. Louis, and Milwaukee.

Many Irish people left Ireland because of the Irish Potato Famine. When a disease destroyed the potato crop in 1846, there was not enough food. Many people died. In the next 10 years, more than a million Irish people came to the United States. Most of them didn't have enough money to leave the Northeast cities where they landed. They built canals and railroads or worked in factories or as servants.

Some people did not like immigrants because their customs seemed different. People also thought immigrants were taking their jobs. Many immigrants worked for little money because they needed jobs. Craftspeople who made goods by hand lost jobs because factories produced goods faster and cheaper. Many Americans left farms to look for jobs in cities.

Making a Better Society

In the 1820s, thousands of people joined Christian churches. This was the Second Great Awakening. During this time, many people tried to reform society. Antislavery and temperance were reform movements. The temperance movement wanted people to stop drinking alcohol.

Women who worked for reform, especially antislavery, saw that they were treated with injustice too. They could not vote, speak in public meetings, or have high-paying jobs. In 1848, women had a meeting in Seneca Falls to talk about their rights. This began the women's rights movement. Newspapers attacked the women's ideas, but many more women joined the movement.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

famine *noun*, a widespread shortage of food

reform *noun*, an action that makes something better

temperance *noun*, controlling or cutting back the drinking of alcohol

injustice *noun*, unfair treatment that abuses a person's rights



After You Read

REVIEW Why did Irish immigrants usually stay in Northeastern cities, while most Germans moved to the Midwest? Circle the sentence that tells the answer.

REVIEW Why did women reformers decide to start a movement to protect their own rights? Draw a box around two sentences that tell the answer.