

Summary: Many New Immigrants

Coming to America

The families of most people in America came here as immigrants. Most came by choice. Enslaved people from Africa were forced to come. Before 1860, most immigrants came from northern and western Europe. After that, more immigrants came from southern or eastern Europe. Between 1860 and 1920, about 29 million immigrants moved to the United States. Immigrants left home because they wanted better lives in the United States. Some immigrants, such as thousands of Russian Jews, left to escape religious persecution.

Immigrants arrived at immigration stations. On the East Coast, they went to Ellis Island in New York. Officials asked immigrants where they planned to live and work. Officials allowed most Europeans to stay. In California, many immigrants from Asia went to the immigration station on Angel Island. In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. It stopped Chinese immigration for ten years. People still came from other Asian countries, especially Japan, to fill jobs that Chinese immigrants had been doing. Prejudice made it harder for Asians to enter America.

Living in a New Country

Many immigrants from Europe lived in cities where they could get jobs and live with other people in the same ethnic group. Many lived in tenements. Many found work in steel mills or coal mines. Others worked in factories that made thread or clothing. Many Asian immigrants worked in small businesses and farms. The lives of immigrants were hard. Their jobs were often dangerous, and the pay was poor. The hard work of immigrants helped American businesses grow fast. The United States became rich. Many people in America did not want new immigrants. They feared they would lose their jobs to immigrants who worked for little pay. Some were prejudiced against people who had a different culture. Many Americans wanted laws to stop new immigration.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

persecution *noun*, unfair treatment that causes suffering

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

tenement *noun*, a rundown, poorly maintained apartment building

After You Read

REVIEW What was the effect of the Chinese Exclusion Act on Asian immigration? Underline the sentence that tells how long Chinese people were kept out of the United States. Highlight the sentence that tells what people from other Asian countries did.

REVIEW What kinds of jobs did new immigrants take? Circle the sentence that tells what work European immigrants found. Highlight the sentence that tells what work Asian immigrants found.