

## 2 The New Immigrants

### TERMS & NAMES

new immigrants

Ellis Island

Angel Island

melting pot

assimilation

Chinese Exclusion  
Act

### MAIN IDEA

Millions of immigrants—mostly from southern and eastern Europe—moved to the United States.

### WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The new immigrants had an important role in shaping American culture in the 20th century.

### ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

In 1907, 10-year-old Edward Corsi left Italy to come to America. After two weeks at sea, he caught his first sight of the Statue of Liberty. He described the reaction of the people on the ship.

#### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

This symbol of America . . . inspired awe in the hopeful immigrants. Many older persons among us, burdened with a thousand memories of what they were leaving behind, had been openly weeping. . . . Now somehow steadied, I suppose, by the concreteness of the symbol of America's freedom, they dried their tears.

Edward Corsi, *In the Shadow of Liberty*

Every day, thousands of immigrants like Corsi streamed through Ellis Island, the nation's immigration station. In this section, you will learn about the immigrants who came to the United States around 1900 and how they affected the nation.



The Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island were two of the first things many immigrants saw of the United States.

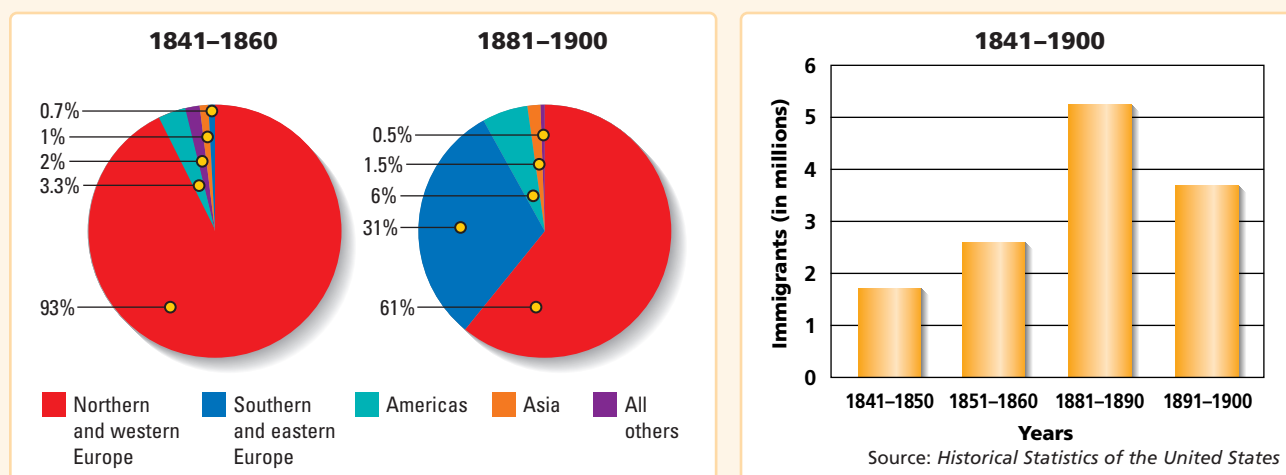
## The New Immigrants

Until the 1890s, most immigrants to the United States had come from northern and western Europe. But after 1900, fewer northern Europeans immigrated, and more southern and eastern Europeans did. This later group of immigrants came to be known as the **new immigrants**. Southern Italy sent large numbers of immigrants. Many Jews from eastern Europe and Slavic peoples, such as Poles and Russians, also immigrated.

**Ellis Island** was the first stop for most immigrants from Europe. There, they were processed before they could enter the United States. First, they had to pass a physical examination. Those with serious health problems or diseases were sent home. Next, they were asked a series of questions: Name? Occupation? How much money do you have?

Louis Adamic came to America from Slovenia, in southeastern Europe, in 1913. Adamic described the night he spent on Ellis Island. He and many other immigrants slept on bunk beds in a huge hall. Lacking a warm blanket, the young man “shivered, sleepless, all night, listening to snores” and dreams “in perhaps a dozen different languages.”

## U.S. Immigration, 1841–1900

**SKILLBUILDER** Interpreting Graphs

1. About how many immigrants came to the United States from 1841 to 1860?
2. About how many southern and eastern European immigrants came to the United States from 1881 to 1900?

While European immigrants passed through Ellis Island on the East Coast, Asians landed at **Angel Island** in San Francisco Bay. In Angel Island's filthy buildings, most Chinese immigrants were held for several weeks. One unhappy prisoner carved in the wall, "For what reason must I sit in jail? It is only because my country is weak and my family poor."

Many Mexican immigrants entered the United States through Texas. Jesús [heh•SOOS] Garza recalled how simple his journey was. "I paid my \$8, passed my examination, then changed my Mexican coins for American money and went to San Antonio, Texas."

## Settling in America

Immigrants settled where they could find jobs. Many found work in American factories. The immigrants contributed to the growth of cities such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Chicago. About half of the new immigrants settled in four industrial states: Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and Illinois.

Once in America, newer immigrants looked for people from the same village in the old country to help them find jobs and housing. People with similar ethnic backgrounds often moved to the same neighborhoods. As a result, ethnic neighborhoods with names like "Little Italy" and "Chinatown" became common in American cities.

The immigrants living in these communities pooled money to build places of worship for their neighborhoods. They published newspapers in their native languages. They commonly supported political machines, often led by politicians who had also come from their country of origin. Such politicians could speak the native language and help new arrivals feel comfortable. Most importantly, politicians could help immigrants find jobs.

***"I paid my \$8,  
passed my  
examination,  
. . . and went  
to San  
Antonio."***

Jesús Garza

### ReadingHistory

**A. Identifying Problems** How did immigrants show creativity in solving problems?



Labor unions helped immigrants fit into American life. The various languages on the signs at this rally show the ethnic diversity in the labor movement.

## Immigrants Take Tough Jobs

Immigrants took whatever jobs they could get. Many immigrants worked in Northern factories. As you read in Chapter 6, most factories offered low wages, long hours, and unsafe conditions. Many European immigrants who had settled in the East found jobs in sweatshops for about \$10 a week. One observer of textile sweatshops noted, “The faces, hands, and arms to the elbows of everyone in the room are black with the color of the cloth on which they are working.”

While European immigrants settled mostly in the East and Midwest, Asian immigrants settled mostly in the West. Many Chinese immigrants worked on the railroad. Others settled in Western cities where they set up businesses such as restaurants and stores. Large numbers of Japanese immigrants first came to Hawaii in 1885 to work on sugar plantations. Others settled on the mainland, where they fished, farmed, and worked in mines.

Immigrants from Mexico came to the Southwest. Mexican immigration increased after 1910 when revolution in that country forced people to flee. Growers and ranchers in California and Texas used the cheap labor Mexican immigrants offered. Owners of copper mines in Arizona hired Mexicans as well.

### ReadingHistory

#### B. Making Inferences

What did all the immigrants seem to have in common?

## Becoming Americans

Some Americans have described the United States as a **melting pot**, or a place where cultures blend. The new immigrants blended into American society as earlier immigrants had. This process of blending into society is called **assimilation**. Most new immigrants were eager to assimilate. To do so, they studied English and how to be American citizens.

Many workers began to assimilate at work. Employers and labor unions both tried to “Americanize” immigrant workers by offering classes in citizenship and English. A Lithuanian worker explained that his labor union helped him learn to “read and speak and enjoy life like an American.” He then became an interpreter for the union to help other Lithuanians become Americans.

At the same time the immigrants were learning about America, they were also *changing* America. Immigrants did not give up their cultures right away. Bits and pieces of immigrant languages, foods, and music worked their way into the rest of American culture.

Despite their efforts to assimilate, immigrants faced prejudice from native-born Americans. Many Protestants feared the arrival of Catholics and Jews. Other native-born Americans thought immigrants would not fit into democratic society because they would be controlled by political machines. Such prejudices led some native-born Americans to push for restrictions to reduce the numbers of new immigrants coming to America.

## Restrictions on Immigration

Many native-born Americans also feared they would have to compete with immigrants for jobs. Immigrants were desperate for jobs and would often take work for lower wages in worse conditions than other Americans. Some Americans worried that there would not be enough jobs for everyone. These fears led to an upsurge in nativist opposition to immigration. In 1882, Congress began to pass laws to restrict immigration. They placed taxes on new immigrants and banned specific groups, such as beggars and people with diseases. Nonwhites faced deeper prejudice than European immigrants, and Asians faced some of the worst. In 1882, Congress passed the **Chinese Exclusion Act**. It banned Chinese immigration for ten years.

The Chinese Exclusion Act was not the only example of prejudice in America around 1900. As you will read in the next section, racial discrimination was common throughout the United States.

### Background

The Chinese Exclusion Act was renewed in 1892. In 1902, the ban was made permanent. It was not repealed until 1943.

## Now and then

### LATE 20TH-CENTURY IMMIGRATION

Historians refer to the people who came to the United States around 1900 as the “new immigrants.” But an even newer wave of immigrants has been coming to the United States since the 1980s.

From 1981 to 1996, nearly 13.5 million people immigrated to the United States. About 6.5 million came from other nations in the Western Hemisphere. In the same period, 4.8 million people came from Asia.



## Section 2 Assessment

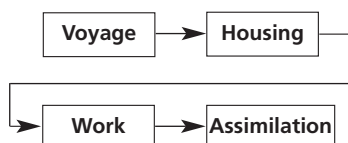
### 1. Terms & Names

#### Explain the significance of:

- new immigrants
- Ellis Island
- Angel Island
- melting pot
- assimilation
- Chinese Exclusion Act

### 2. Taking Notes

Use a chart to take notes on immigrant experiences in the United States.



Which part of the immigrant experience was the most difficult?

### 3. Main Ideas

- How were the new immigrants different from earlier immigrants?
- How did immigrants support one another?
- Why did nonwhite immigrants have a harder time assimilating than European immigrants did?

### 4. Critical Thinking

#### Making Generalizations

How well does the idea of the melting pot reflect U.S. immigration around 1900?

#### THINK ABOUT

- assimilation
- immigrant languages and cultures
- ethnic neighborhoods

### ACTIVITY OPTIONS

#### MATH GEOGRAPHY

Research immigration to your city or state. Create a **spreadsheet** of this information or draw a **map** showing immigration routes.