

Early 20th Century Issues

Immigration



What class of our citizens most strenuously resist the moral restraints of the community....who among our population give unrestricted and unregulated license to the ten thousand drinking places in the city, which are the chief receptacles of drunkenness, debauchery, villainy, and disease? It is the residuum or dregs of four millions of European immigrants, including paupers, felons, and convicts that have landed at this port within the last twenty years.

Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the New York Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor, 1867

The best reason that could be given for this radical restriction of immigration is the necessity of protecting our population against degeneration and saving our national peace and quiet from imported turbulence and disorder.

I cannot believe that we would be protected against these evils by limiting immigration to those who can read and write in any language twenty-five words of our Constitution. In my opinion it is infinitely more safe to admit a hundred thousand immigrants who, though unable to read and write, seek among us only a home and opportunity to work, than to admit one of those unruly agitators and enemies of governmental control, who can not only read and write but delights in arousing by inflammatory speech the illiterate and peacefully inclined to discontent and tumult. Violence and disorder do not originate with illiterate laborers.

President Cleveland's veto of immigration restriction bill

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus"

There is no room in this country for hyphenated Americanism...The one absolutely certain way of bringing the nation to ruin, of preventing all possibility of its continuing to be a nation at all, would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities.

Theodore Roosevelt, 1915

★ Questions To Think About

1. What social evils do critics associate with mass immigration?
2. Which is the goal of American immigration--a "melting pot" or cultural pluralism?
3. What kind of immigration policy is most consistent with the nation's needs and ideals?

Immigrant America

★ Interpreting Statistics

Number of Immigrants	
1820	8,385
1830	23,322
1840	84,066
1850	369,980
1860	153,640
1870	387,203
1880	457,257
1890	455,302
1900	448,572
1910	1,041,570
1920	430,001
1930	241,700
1940	70,756
1950	249,187

★ Questions To Think About

1. During which period was immigration greatest?
2. Has wartime or depression increased or decreased immigration?

Impact of Immigration Quotas

★ Interpreting Statistics

Average Annual Inflow

	Immigrants from Northern and Western Europe	Other Immigrants
1907-1914	176,983	685,531
Quotas under 1921 Act	198,082	158,367
Quotas under 1924 Act	140,999	20,847

★ Questions To Think About

1. What impact did quotas have upon immigration?
2. Which groups suffered the most restriction?

★ Interpreting Statistics

Family Characteristics of Major Immigrant Groups, 1909-1914			
Group	Percentage Returning to Europe	Males Per 100 Females	Percent Under 14
Czechs	5	133	19 %
English	6	136	16 %
Finish	7	181	8 %
Germans	7	132	18 %
Greeks	16	170	4 %
Hebrews	2	117	25 %
Hungarians	22	141	16 %
Italians	17	320	12 %
Poles	13	188	10 %
Slovaks	19	162	12 %

★ Questions To Think About

1. Which immigrant groups were most likely to leave the United States and return home?
2. Which groups had the most even sex ratio? the least even?
3. Which groups included the largest number of children?

★ Interpreting Statistics

Age of Marriage for Women				
	15-19	20-24	25-29	45-54
German	10	49	77	96
Irish	2	18	46	85

Italian	29	74	93	99
Japanese	51	85	87	93
Polish	15	66	89	99
Russian	7	55	90	99
Urban Blacks	16	57	n.a.	94
Native Whites	13	53	77	91

★ Questions To Think About

1. Which immigrant groups married earliest? latest?
2. Explain why some groups married earlier than others and why this is significant.

Child Labor

★ Interpreting Statistics

Proportion of Children 10-15 in Labor Force				
		Boston	Philadelphia	Pittsburgh
Boys	Native	7	20	20
	2nd generation	8	24	20
	1st generation	19	39	30
	Black	10	17	19
Girls	Native	3	12	5
	2nd generation	6	18	8
	1st generation	13	39	18
	Black	4	14	7

★ Questions To Think About

1. Which groups were most likely to have children in the labor force?
2. Which groups were least likely?

Controversies of the 1920s

Sacco and Vanzetti

I am not only innocent...but...in all my life I have never stole, never killed, never spilled blood, but I have struggled all my life, since I began to reason, to eliminate crime from the earth....

I am suffering because I am a radical and indeed I am a radical; I have suffered because I was an Italian, and indeed I am an Italian...but I am so convinced to be right that if you could execute me two times, and if I could be reborn two other times, I would live again to do what I have done already.

Bartolomeo Vanzetti, 1927

Child Labor

If there is any matter upon which civilized countries have agreed...it is the evil of premature and excessive child labor.....It is not for this Court...to say that [Prohibition]...is permissible against strong drink, but not as against the product of ruined lives.

Justice Holmes's dissent in Hammer v. Dagenhart

Evolution and Religion

What has religion to do with facts? Nothing. Is there any such thing as Methodist mathematics, Presbyterian botany, Catholic astronomy, or Baptist biology? What has any form of superstition or religion to do with a fact or with any science? Nothing but to hinder, delay or embarrass.

Robert G. Ingersoll

Be it Enacted, by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, that it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the universities, normals, and all other public schools in the State, which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the State, to teach the theory that denies the story of the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.

Tennessee state law

What is Darwinism? It is Atheism.

Charles Hodge

Evolution is God's way of doing things.

John Fiske

Evolution, applied to religion, will influence it only as the hidden temples are restored, by removing the sands which have drifted in from the arid deserts of scholastic and medieval theologies. It will change theology, but only to bring out the simple temple of God in clearer and more beautiful lines and proportions.

Rev. Henry Ward Beecher

The first objection to Darwinism is that it is only a guess and was never anything more....The second objection to Darwin's guess is that it has not one syllable in the Bible to support it. This ought to make Christians cautious about accepting it without thorough investigation....Third--Neither Darwin nor his supporters have been able to find a fact in the universe to support their hypothesis. With millions of species, the investigators have not been able to find one single instance in which one species has changed into another...

Theistic evolution may be defined as an anesthetic which deadens the patient's pain while atheism removes his religion.

William Jennings Bryan

Here we find to-day as brazen and as bold an attempt to destroy learning as was ever made in the Middle Ages and the open difference is we have not provided that malefactors shall be burned at the stake. But here is time for that, your Honor. We have to approach these things gradually....

If to-day you can take a thing like evolution and make it a crime to teach it in the public school...at the next session you may ban books and newspapers....Ignorance and fanaticism are ever busy and need feeding. Always they are anxious and gloating for more.

Clarence Darrow

★ Questions To Think About

- 1. Why were many Americans in the early 1920s hostile toward immigrants and foreign political ideas?**
- 2. How would you explain the opposition to a prohibition on child labor?**
- 3. Why do you think the issue of evolution become a cause célèbre in the 1920s?**