

Charting Immigration: How Many Came and Why

GRADE LEVEL: 9-12

INTRODUCTION

Migration to the United States between 1860 and 1920 stimulated the country's economy and the growth of the working class. More than 1 million immigrants entered the country every five years between the end of the Civil War and World War I. More than 9 million people arrived between 1865 and 1890; another 16 million came between 1890 and 1915.

The story of early twentieth-century immigration to the United States is often told in romantic or patriotic terms emphasizing the forces that drew migrants to America, such as economic opportunities and religious freedom. Such images have an element of truth, but pay too little attention to the events outside of the United States that pushed migrants away from their country's of origin. Millions of men and women migrating to the United States were part of larger global phenomenon that moved peoples around the world, not just to America. Throughout Europe and parts of Asia, a combination of population growth and economic change pressured individuals and families to leave their homes and try to begin new lives elsewhere.

This activity is designed to encourage students to compare and contrast patterns of migration from different parts of the world during the first quarter the twentieth century. Students then conduct further research on specific nations or ethnicities to determine why people moved and to compare these motivations with migration patterns reported in newspapers today.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As early as 1880 most American workers were either immigrants, the children of immigrants, or African American; by 1900 almost a third of the nation's day workers were foreign born. By contrast, relatively few native white Americans, whose parents were also native-born, belonged to the working class. Even in small Midwestern cities, fewer than one-fifth of the working class came from native parentage.

Until the mid-1880s, the great majority of immigrants came, as they had for some time, from northern and western Europe. Between 1876 and 1880, for example, Great Britain, Ireland, Scandinavia, Germany, and Canada accounted for over 75% of all immigrants. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, however, migration from these countries began to ebb, while new migration patterns increased from southern and eastern Europe. Between 1906 and 1910, for example, more than 1-million migrants came from Italy alone, while another 2 million came from Russia, central Europe, and the Baltic states. To native Americans, these "new immigrants" seemed less familiar and often less desirable than the "old" immigrants from western and northern Europe.

Some migrants brought property or capital with them and came as settlers, intent on farming or establishing a business in a new country. But most were not so lucky; they traveled only with their skills or their muscle. In the North and West, factories, mines, and construction sites were

peopled largely with immigrants; by the beginning of the twentieth century they constituted 44% of all miners, 36% of all steelworkers, and 38% of all cotton mill operatives.

What this meant is that class boundaries were beginning to align along ethnic and racial lines. America's middle class consisted overwhelmingly of white, native-born families whose parents had also been born in the United States. The working class was predominantly African American in the South, and either foreign-born or of foreign parentage in the North.

THEMES: immigration, patterns, graphs, motivations, citizenship

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students, following this activity, will be able to:

1. Compare and contrast immigration patterns to the United States from different regions of the world in the early twentieth century.
2. Convert information from a table into a bar graph.
3. Research information about motivations for immigration.
4. Compare immigration into and emigration from the United States at the turn of the twentieth century to patterns today.

NEW JERSEY STANDARDS

STANDARD 6.3 (World History) All students will demonstrate knowledge of world history in order to understand life and events in the past and how they relate to the present and the future.

STANDARD 6.4 (United States and New Jersey History) All students will demonstrate knowledge of United States and New Jersey history in order to understand life and events in the past and how they relate to the present and future (particularly strand c, "Many Worlds Meet").

STANDARD 6.6 (Geography) All students will apply knowledge of spatial relationships and other geographic skills to understand human behavior in relation to the physical and cultural environment.

MATERIALS

- Table handout: "Immigration, 1899-1924" (Appendix A in this activity)
- Graph paper
- Access to the Internet, textbooks, or school library for information about different ethnic communities' migration patterns at the turn of the twentieth century
- If you elect to complete follow-up activity #2, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Naturalization Test (a practice test released by the agency for migrants seeking US Citizenship which appears as Appendix C in this activity)

DETAILS OF ACTIVITY

Part 1: Dividing the World (10-15 min.):

Distribute the table handout “Immigration, 1899-1924” (which appears as Appendix A at the end of this lesson). Ask student to divide the nations on the table into one of the seven groups below.

Western Europe

Eastern Europe

Southern Europe

Americas (includes Central America, South America, Canada, and the Caribbean)

Asia

Africa

Other

Many countries will be familiar but not all (some nations’ names have changed). Students should use a globe, map or the internet to locate countries they are not familiar with to complete this activity (a teacher’s key with these divisions appears below as Appendix B).

Part 2: Tracing Patterns of Immigration (30-40 min.):

Divide students into five groups and have each group focus on one of the following regions:

- a) Western Europe
- b) Eastern Europe
- c) Southern Europe
- d) Americas
- e) Asia/Africa/Other (these regions have been grouped as fewer nations or ethnic groups appear from these regions on the assigned table)

You may wish to divide the groups that are larger (for example, eastern European) between two groups of students.

Each group should work to create two sets of bar graphs. Students can hand-draw these graphs using graph paper or, if the class has access to computer with Microsoft Office, students could input their information and create bar graphs using Microsoft Excel.

The first set of graphs will consider each individual country or group separately and compares the “Immigration Rate” (number of people moving into the United States) with the “Emigration Rate” (number of people leaving the United States) between 1899 and 1924. In most instances, the immigration bar on the graph will be higher than the emigration rate.

The second set of graphs should provide two composite pictures of each group’s region, and should compare the “Immigration” and “Emigration” rates for all nations/groups in their subset. Ask students to arrange groups on the bar graph in descending order (highest immigration rate and highest emigration rate to lowest).

Part 3: Reporting Out (15 minutes)

Have each group present their finding to the class. Which nation or ethnicity was highest in each group? Which was lowest? Based on what they have already been assigned to read for class about this time period, have students speculate on the reasons why some groups might have been more likely to immigrate during these years.

Follow-up #1: Motivations for Immigration (1 class period, following a homework assignment that extends over at least a week)

Assign students different nationalities or ethnicities from the table in Appendix A to research either individually or in groups. Students should use their textbook, books available in their school library, and internet resources. Good collections of readings, primary documents, and websites on immigration are posted under “Summer 2009” on the “One Nation, Many Americans Project,” a TAH Grant of Greater Egg Harbor Regional School District (http://www.etc.net/tah/Summer_Institute_2009.html).

Next have students monitor daily newspaper for a week for any articles about immigration or movement of peoples. These can be limited to migration into or out of the United States, or you might assign a larger scope—any form of immigration around the world.

Working individually or in groups, students should compare the motivations for migration at the turn of the twentieth century with motivations reported in the newspaper today. They should be able to find a wide variety of reasons—economic opportunity, religious persecution, political refugee, war, or famine. Do not forget forced migration—those that are forced to leave their homes. Students should collect the newspaper articles they are working with, and be prepared to share their findings with the class.

Follow-up #2: Naturalization Test (10-15 min. to complete the test; an additional 25-35 minutes to diagram the test questions and discuss their content and relevance).

Migrants to the United States who want to become U.S. citizens must study for and pass a Naturalization Test. Appendix D includes 35 sample questions available at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website (<http://www.uscis.gov>). Students should complete the test and then compare their answers.

Once students have shared their responses, ask them to consider the kinds of questions they were asked to answer. It might be helpful to diagram these on the board (for example, which questions were about: early American history, nineteenth-century history, twentieth-century history, the function of government, geography, social responsibility, etc.).

As a class, discuss how they felt about the composition of the questions. Were some categories of question more prominent than others? Do students agree or disagree with the types of knowledge USCIS test-makers felt is important for new migrants to know about the United States? Are there any questions or categories of knowledge students would recommend adding to a test of this nature and why? How well do they think the average native American would perform on such a test?

REFERENCES and WEBSITES:

This lesson plan is adapted from “An Immigration Graph,” part of the Education World website (<http://www.education-world.com/>) and released practice questions from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website (<http://www.uscis.gov>).

For more information about turn-of-the-century immigration and migration see:

Frederick Binder and David M. Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987).

Oscar Handlin, *The Epic Story of the Great Migration that Made the American People*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

John Higman, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

Appendix A:
Immigration Handout, 1899-1924

| Ethnic Group | Immigration Rate | Emigration Rate |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Italian | 3,820,986 | 1,137,100 |
| Hebrew | 1,837,855 | 52,048 |
| German | 1,316,614 | 117,961 |
| Polish | 1,483,374 | 320,429 |
| Scandinavian | 936,308 | 96,431 |
| British | 983,982 | 130,054 |
| Irish | 808,762 | 47,311 |
| Anglo-Canadian | 567,941 | 66,249 |
| Slovak | 536,911 | 129,032 |
| Mexican | 447,065 | |
| Croatian/Slovenian | 485,379 | 115,114 |
| Magyar | 492,031 | 149,508 |
| French-Canadian | 257,219 | 14,014 |
| Greek | 500,463 | 175,830 |
| Ruthenian | 265,478 | 20,032 |
| Lithuanian | 263,277 | 34,986 |
| Japanese | 260,492 | 44,392 |
| Finnish | 226,922 | 30,931 |
| Dutch/Flemish | 205,910 | 25,720 |
| Bohemian/Moravian | 159,319 | 16,191 |
| Portuguese | 186,244 | 42,991 |
| African | 135,029 | 23,850 |
| Spanish | 190,521 | 64,720 |
| Russian | 258,985 | 110,003 |
| French | 158,025 | 49,829 |
| Syrian | 97,716 | 14,752 |
| Armenian | 76,129 | 8,995 |
| Rumanian | 148,251 | 64,106 |
| Cuban | 77,028 | 24,998 |
| Bosnian/Dalation/Herzogovian | 52,130 | 8,987 |
| Bosnian/Dalation/Herzogovian | 165,091 | 94,330 |
| West Indian | 29,257 | 9,056 |
| Korean | 9,214 | 1,022 |
| East Indian | 8,234 | 2,268 |
| Turkish | 22,021 | 11,600 |
| Pacific Islander | 491 | 59 |
| Chinese | 59,079 | 51,343 |

Appendix B:

Teacher's Key: Immigration by Region

A) Western/Northern Europe

German
Scandinavian
British Irish
Finnish
Dutch/Flemish
Portuguese
Spanish
French

B) Eastern Europe

Polish
Slovak
Croatian/Slovenian
Magyar
Ruthenian
Lithuanian
Bohemian/Moravian
Russian
Romanian
Bosnian/Dalmatian/Herzegovinian
Bosnian/Dalmatian/Herzegovinian
Bulgarian

C) Southern Europe

Italian
Greek

D) Americas

Anglo-Canadian
Mexican
French-Canadian
Cuban
West Indian

E) Asia/Africa/Middle East/Other (these regions have been grouped as fewer nations or ethnic groups appear from these regions on the assigned table)

Hebrew
Japanese
African
Syrian
Armenian
Korean
East Indian
Turkish
Pacific Islander
Chinese

Appendix C:

U.S. Naturalization Test

(based on the practice test available at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, USCIS, website: <http://www.uscis.gov>)

1. Name two national U.S. holidays.

- Valentine's Day and Presidents' Day
- April Fool's Day and Labor Day
- Citizenship Day and Columbus Day
- Labor Day and Thanksgiving

2. Who is the "Father of Our Country"?

- Abraham Lincoln
- Thomas Jefferson
- George Washington
- Patrick Henry

3. What was one important thing that Abraham Lincoln did?

- purchased Alaska
- declared war on Great Britain
- saved (or preserved) the Union
- established the United Nations

4. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?

- James Madison
- George Washington
- Thomas Jefferson
- Abraham Lincoln

5. How many amendments does the Constitution have?

- twenty-three (23)
- twenty-seven (27)
- ten (10)
- twenty-one (21)

6. Who did the United States fight in World War II?

- Austria-Hungary, Japan, and Germany
- Japan, China, and Vietnam
- Japan, Germany, and Italy
- the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy

7. What is one responsibility that is only for United States citizens?

- pay taxes
- obey the law
- serve on a jury
- be respectful of others

8. Who lived in America before the Europeans arrived?

- Floridians
- no one
- Canadians
- American Indians

9. How many U.S. Senators are there?

- four hundred thirty-five (435)
- one hundred (100)
- fifty-two (52)
- fifty (50)

10. Name one war fought by the United States in the 1900s.

- Civil War
- Revolutionary War
- World War I
- War of 1812

11. What is one thing Benjamin Franklin is famous for?

- youngest member of the Constitutional Convention
- U.S. diplomat
- inventor of the airplane
- third President of the United States

12. What is the economic system in the United States?

- socialist economy
- capitalist economy
- none of these answers
- communist economy

13. Why did the colonists fight the British?

- because of high taxes
- because the British army stayed in their houses
- because they didn't have self-government
- all of these answers

14. The Federalist Papers supported the passage of the U.S. Constitution. Name one of the writers.

- James Madison
- George Washington
- Thomas Jefferson
- John Adams

15. There are four amendments to the Constitution about who can vote. Describe one of them.

- Citizens by birth only can vote.
- Citizens seventeen (17) and older can vote.
- Only citizens with a job can vote.
- Citizens eighteen (18) and older can vote.

16. What does the Constitution do?

- defines the government
- sets up the government
- protects basic rights of Americans
- all of these answers

17. What ocean is on the East Coast of the United States?

- Atlantic Ocean
- Arctic Ocean
- Pacific Ocean
- Indian Ocean

18. Who was the first President?

- Abraham Lincoln
- Thomas Jefferson
- George Washington
- John Adams

19. What are the two major political parties in the United States?

- Democratic-Republican and Whigs
- Reform and Green
- American and Bull-Moose
- Democratic and Republican

20. What did Susan B. Anthony do?

- the first woman elected to the House of Representatives
- made the first flag of the United States
- founded the Red Cross
- fought for women's rights

21. What is the capital of the United States?

- New York, NY
- Boston, MA
- Philadelphia, PA
- Washington, D.C.

22. What is an amendment?

- an addition (to the Constitution)
- the Preamble to the Constitution
- the beginning of the Declaration of Independence
- an introduction

23. What is the "rule of law"?

- Everyone must follow the law.
- Everyone but the President must follow the law.
- Government does not have to follow the law.
- All laws must be the same in every state.

24. Under our Constitution, some powers belong to the federal government. What is one power of the federal government?

- to provide schooling
- to make treaties
- to issue driver's licenses
- to provide police departments

25. Who makes federal laws?

- the President
- the states
- the Supreme Court
- Congress

26. What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?

- give an elected official your opinion on an issue and join a community group
- vote and join a civic group
- all of these answers
- write to a newspaper and call Senators and Representatives

27. When is the last day you can send in federal income tax forms?

- May 15
- March 15
- April 15
- July 4

28. What did Martin Luther King, Jr. do?

- fought for women's suffrage
- ran for President of the United States
- fought for civil rights
- became a U.S. Senator

29. Name one American Indian tribe in the United States.

- Cherokee
- Zawi Chemi
- Celts
- Slavs

30. There were 13 original states. Name three.

- Washington, Oregon, and California
- Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida
- New York, Kentucky, and Georgia
- Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina

31. Before he was President, Eisenhower was a general. What war was he in?

- World War II
- World War I
- Civil War
- Vietnam War

32. We elect a U.S. Representative for how many years?

- four (4)
- two (2)
- eight (8)
- six (6)

33. Who was President during World War I?

- Franklin Roosevelt
- Theodore Roosevelt
- Woodrow Wilson
- Warren Harding

34. What are two Cabinet-level positions?

- Secretary of Weather and Secretary of Energy
- Secretary of Homeland Security and Secretary of the Treasury
- Secretary of Health and Human Services and Secretary of the Navy
- Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of History

35. Name one problem that led to the Civil War.

- westward expansion
- sugar
- slavery
- oil

Appendix D:

U.S. Naturalization Test Answer Key

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|---|--|
| 1. Labor Day and Thanksgiving | 19. Democratic and Republican |
| 2. George Washington | 20. fought for women's rights |
| 3. Saved (or preserved) the Union | 21. Washington, D.C. |
| 4. Thomas Jefferson | 22. an addition (to the Constitution) |
| 5. Twenty-seven (27) | 23. everyone must follow the law |
| 6. Japan, Germany, and Italy | 24. to make treaties |
| 7. Serve on a jury | 25. Congress |
| 8. American Indians | 26. all of these answers |
| 9. one hundred (100) | 27. April 15 |
| 10. World War I | 28. fought for civil rights |
| 11. U.S. Diplomat | 29. Cherokee |
| 12. capitalist system | 30. Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina |
| 13. all of the above | 31. World War II |
| 14. James Madison | 32. Two (2) |
| 15. Citizens eighteen (18) and older can vote | 33. Woodrow Wilson |
| 16. all of the above | 34. Secretary of Homeland Security and Secretary of the Treasury |
| 17. Atlantic Ocean | 35. slavery |
| 18. George Washington | |