

Life in America: Challenges Immigrants Faced

Life after Ellis Island... If you moved to a new country as an immigrant, what would you look for as a source of comfort? Consider the things would you miss the most about your home country. What would you do as soon as you arrived?

Finding a Place to Live

1. **Ethnic Neighborhoods:**

- a. DEFINE:
 - i. Many came from peasant backgrounds to NE cities (big change from rural villages)
 - ii. Communities provided help, same language, familiar food and cultural traditions (newspapers, foods, businesses)
 - iii. Help Americanize people – _____ served as mentors to help new immigrants find jobs and homes, and learn the language
- b. Ethnic institutions like churches, businesses, entertainment, newspapers, etc. all helped immigrants feel at home in their new country.

2. **Tenement Living:**

- a. DEFINE "TENEMENT"

- b. How would you characterize tenement living conditions?

Trying to understand the language and customs

1. DEFINE **Americanization:**

- a. Most Americans believed that the public schools could play an important role in helping to assimilate new immigrants into American life.
- b. Americanization programs were supported by:

2. What is **Nativism**?
 - a. Began in the late 19th century and continued into the early 20th century
 - b. Goal:

 - c. Immigration restrictions & discrimination against immigrants were not new in the late 19th century.
 - i. As early as the 1850s, some in politics had called for what changes? (LIST 3)

 - d. Who were the Nativists?
 - i. Supporters of the Nativist Movement included:
 1. _____ (wanted to control dangerous, immoral behavior (drinking on the job, etc.))
 2. _____ and social reformers (blamed immigrants for social problems, saw them as weak and lacking morals)
 3. _____ (feared the threat to American society and govt., wanted to limit numbers/types of immigrants)
 4. _____ (feared job competition)
 5. _____ (feared Catholics particularly, wanted to limit Catholic influence in America)
3. Anti-Immigration Themes
 - a. Immigrants are lazy, indigent, drug/alcohol abusers, prostitutes, competition for jobs, etc.
 - b. Which two groups were most often negatively targeted by Nativist cartoons?
 - i. _____ immigrants:
 1. Competition with native-born Americans for jobs/money
 2. Images of Chinese women as prostitutes and men as drug abusers
 - ii. Irish immigrants:
 1. Fear of _____
 2. Representation of the Irish as _____ savages

Getting Jobs & Working Conditions

1. What jobs did immigrants get?

2. How would you describe work in the coal mines?

3. How would you describe work in glass factories? What effect did the work have on laborers?

4. What were some of the hazards to working in textile mills and factories? (LIST 2 EXAMPLES)

5. Industrial diseases: (PROVIDE 3 EXAMPLES)

6. **Sweatshops:**

a. Workers in sweatshops were paid piecework - DEFINE:

b. Long work hours and conditions demanded all family members work (including kids as young as 3 or 4 years in age.)

i. HOW SO? EXPLAIN:

c. Children in sweatshops were denied the right to sleep, worked from early morning until late at night, and were denied an education.

Living conditions – Company Towns

1. In the cases of companies which were located outside of urban areas, many business owners created company owned towns where their workers lived.

a. Business owner controlled the factory, stores, housing, police, schools, everything in a town

b. Workers often paid in credit for goods at the company stores & paid their bill from their weekly paycheck.

c. Always in debt to the company (like sharecropping) – HOW SO? EXPLAIN.

IN CONCLUSION...

Living & Working Conditions: horrible, unsanitary, long hours, dangerous work environment, no insurance or legal protections

Workers' status:

- Easily replaced
- No power to change or control their treatment
- No control over wages
- At mercy of business owners (ex: company towns and poor working conditions) and landlords

Owners' status:

- Distanced from conditions of workers
- Owners cut workers' wages to maximize their own profit
- No regard for workers' rights or safety

Feelings of powerlessness gave way to the rise to labor unions.