

# The Hopes of Immigrants

## MAIN IDEA

In the mid-1800s, millions of Europeans came to the United States hoping to build a better life.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

These Germans, Irish, and Scandinavians had a strong influence on American culture.

## TERMS & NAMES

emigrant  
immigrant  
steerage  
push-pull factor  
famine  
prejudice  
nativist

## ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

In June 1831, Gjert Hovland (YEHRT HAHV•LIHND) and his family left Norway for America. After a few years, Hovland wrote to a friend in Norway.

### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

It would greatly please me to learn that all of you who are in need and have little chance of supporting yourselves and your families have decided to leave Norway and come to America; for, even if many more come, there will still be room here for all. Those who are willing to work will not lack employment or business here.

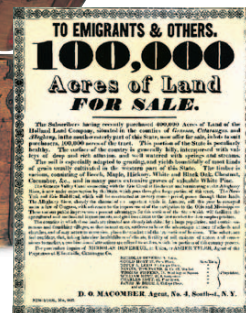
Gjert Hovland, letter to Torjuls Maeland, April 22, 1835

Millions of people like Hovland decided to become **emigrants**, or people who leave a country. Arriving in the United States, they became **immigrants**, or people who settle in a new country. This section explains how immigrants enriched the United States with their work and their cultures.

## Why People Migrated

Most immigrants endured hardships to come to America. Although some, like Hovland, brought their families, many immigrant men came alone and suffered loneliness. Nearly all immigrants made the ocean voyage in **steerage**, the cheapest deck on a ship. In steerage, hundreds of people lived jammed together for ten days to a month. Conditions were filthy. Many passengers became ill or died on the journey.

Despite the hard passage, immigrants flocked to the United States during the mid-1800s. They came from Britain, Ireland, Germany, Scandinavia (Sweden, Denmark, and Norway), and China. Most came from Europe. What made them come to America? Historians talk about



Advertisements for land attracted immigrants, who came to the United States with only what could fit in trunks like the one shown above.

### Taking Notes

Use your chart to take notes about the influence of immigrants.

	How People
Immigrants	
Writers	
Reformers	
Abolitionists	
Women	

## Push–Pull Factors of Immigration

**PULL**

1. Freedom
2. Economic opportunity
3. Abundant land



1. Population growth
2. Agricultural changes
3. Crop failures
4. Industrial Revolution
5. Religious and political turmoil

**PUSH**

**push-pull factors.** These forces push people out of their native lands and pull them toward a new place. **Push factors** included the following:

1. **Population growth.** Better food and sanitation caused Europe’s population to boom after 1750, and the land became overcrowded.
2. **Agricultural changes.** As Europe’s population grew, so did cities. Landowners wanted to make money selling food to those cities. New methods made it more efficient to farm large areas of land than to rent small plots to tenants. So landlords forced tenants off the land.
3. **Crop failures.** Poor harvests made it difficult for small farmers to pay their debts. Some of these farmers chose to start over in America. Crop failures also led to hunger, causing people to emigrate.
4. **Industrial Revolution.** Goods produced in factories became cheaper than goods produced by artisans. Suddenly out of work, some artisans took factory jobs. Others emigrated.
5. **Religious and political turmoil.** To escape religious persecution, Quakers fled Norway and Jews left Germany. Also, many Germans came to America after a revolution in Germany failed in 1848.

**Vocabulary**  
tenant: renter

**Vocabulary**  
artisan: skilled worker

Immigrants chose the United States because of three main **pull factors**:

1. **Freedom.** As Gjert Hovland wrote, “Everyone has the freedom to practice the teaching and religion he prefers.”
2. **Economic opportunity.** Immigrants sought a land where they could support their families and have a better future. Immigration often rose during times of U.S. prosperity and fell during hard times.
3. **Abundant land.** The acquisition of the Louisiana Purchase and the Mexican Cession gave the United States millions more acres of land. To land-starved Europeans, America was a land of opportunity.

### **ReadingHistory**

**A. Solving Problems** Many of the push factors were problems. Which pull factors were solutions to which problems?

## Scandinavians Seek Land

Public land in America was sold for \$1.25 an acre, which lured thousands of Scandinavians. At first, their governments tried to keep them at home. A Swedish law of 1768 restricted the right to emigrate. But growing poverty in Scandinavia caused officials to cancel this law in 1840.

Scandinavian clergymen also tried to halt the emigration. At first, they warned their church members against leaving the homeland. Eventually, though, the preachers realized their words had little effect. Some of them even went to America themselves.

**ReadingHistory**

**B. Making Inferences** Why do you think Scandinavians moved to places that felt familiar?

In the United States, Scandinavians chose regions that felt familiar. Many settled in the Midwest, especially Minnesota and Wisconsin. These states had lakes, forests, and cold winters like their homelands. A high proportion of Scandinavian immigrants became farmers.

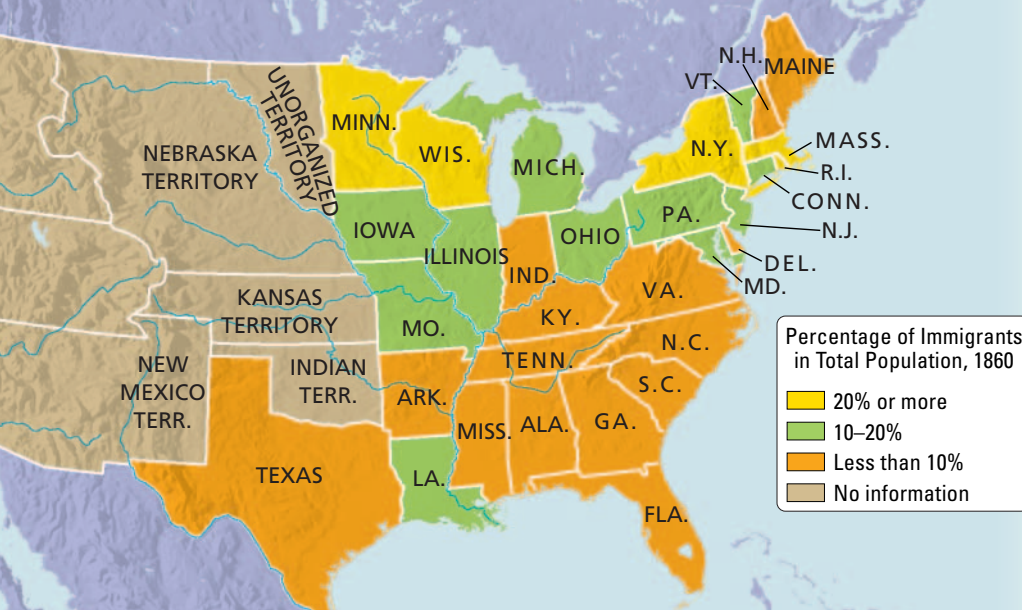
**Germans Pursue Economic Opportunity**

Like the Scandinavians, many Germans moved to the Midwest. Germans especially liked Wisconsin because the climate allowed them to grow their traditional crop of oats. Some moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, because the Catholic bishop there was German. (In the 1800s, German Christian immigrants included both Catholics and Protestants.)

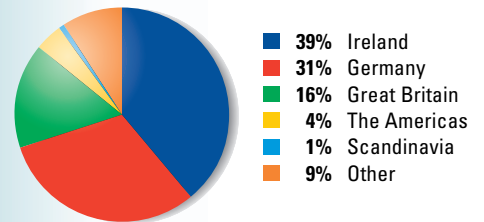
Germans also settled in Texas. In New Braunfels, a group of German nobles bought land and sold it in parcels to German immigrants. The town had to survive poor harvests and conflicts with Native Americans, but it eventually prospered. Germans also founded Fredericksburg, Texas, which still retains its German culture today.

Immigrants from Germany settled in cities as well as on farms or the frontier. German artisans opened businesses as bakers, butchers, carpenters, printers, shoemakers, and tailors. Many German immigrants achieved great success. For instance, in 1853 John Jacob Bausch and Henry Lomb started a firm to make eyeglasses and other lenses. Their company became the world's largest lens maker.

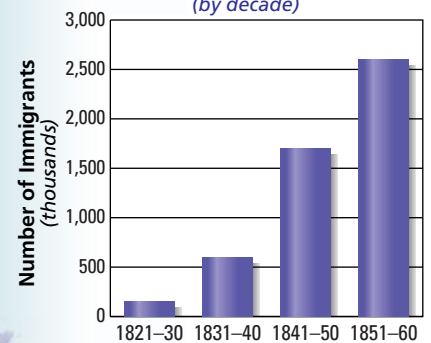
**Immigration and Settlement, 1820–1860**



**Sources of Immigration, 1820–1860**



**Immigration to the United States (by decade)**



Source: Historical Statistics of the United States

**GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Maps**

- 1. Place** Which states had the highest percentage of immigrants in 1860?
- 2. Region** Compare the settlement of immigrants in the North and the South. What do you know about the South that might account for this difference?



## daily life

### IMMIGRANT CULTURE

To maintain their culture, immigrants continued many of their traditional activities in the United States. For example, German culture is rich in music. German immigrants put together marching bands, symphony orchestras, and choruses.

In Ireland, many of the Irish had poured their energy into defying the British. This gave them experience with political organization. As a result, Irish immigrants became active in U.S. politics, especially in the cities.

Some German immigrants were Jews. Many of them worked as traveling salespeople. They brought pins, needles, pots—and news—to frontier homes and mining camps. In time, some opened their own general stores. Other Jews settled in cities, where many found success. For example, Alexander Rothschild worked as a grocer upon arriving in Hartford, Connecticut, in the 1840s. By 1851, he ran a popular hotel.

The Germans were the largest immigrant group of the 1800s and strongly influenced American culture. Many things we think of as originating in America came from Germany—the Christmas tree, gymnasi-ums, kindergartens, and the hamburger and frankfurter.

## The Irish Flee Hunger

Most Irish immigrants were Catholic. Protestant Britain had ruled Ireland for centuries—and controlled the Catholic majority by denying them rights. Irish Catholics could not vote, hold office, own land, or go to school. Because of the poverty produced by Britain's rule, some Irish came to America in the early 1800s.

Then, in 1845, a disease attacked Ireland's main food crop, the potato, causing a severe food shortage called a **famine**. The Irish Potato Famine killed 1 million people

and forced many to emigrate. By 1854, between 1.5 and 2 million Irish had fled their homeland.

In America, Irish farmers became city-dwellers. Arriving with little or no savings, many of these immigrants had to settle in the port cities where their ships had docked. By 1850, the Irish made up one-fourth of the population of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.

The uneducated Irish immigrants arrived with few skills and had to take low-paying, back-breaking jobs. Irish women took in washing or worked as servants. The men built canals and railroads across America. So many Irishmen died doing this dangerous work that people said there was “an Irishman buried under every [railroad] tie.” In 1841, British novelist Charles Dickens observed the huts in which railroad workers lived.

### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

The best were poor protection from the weather; the worst let in the wind and rain through the wide breaches in the roofs of sodden grass and in the walls of mud; some had neither door nor window; some had nearly fallen down.

Charles Dickens, quoted in *To Seek America*

The Irish competed with free blacks for the jobs that nobody else wanted. Both groups had few other choices in America in the 1800s.

## U.S. Cities Face Overcrowding

Immigrants like the Irish and Germans flocked to American cities. So did native-born Americans, who hoped for the chance to make a better

### Background

The hamburger and frankfurter are named after the German cities Hamburg and Frankfurt am Main.

### Reading History

#### C. Drawing

**Conclusions** How did the effects of British rule make it hard for Irish immigrants to America to find good jobs?

living. Between 1800 and 1830, New York's population jumped from 60,489 to 202,589. St. Louis doubled its population every nine years. Cincinnati grew even faster, doubling every seven years.

Rapid urban growth brought problems. Not enough housing existed for all the newcomers. Greedy landlords profited from the housing shortage by squeezing large apartment buildings onto small lots. Using every inch of space for rooms, these cramped living quarters lacked sunlight and fresh air. Their outdoor toilets overflowed, spreading disease. In such depressing urban neighborhoods, crime flourished.

American cities were unprepared to tackle these problems. In fact, before 1845, New York City had no public police force. Until the 1860s, it had only a volunteer fire department. And in 1857, the rapidly growing city had only 138 miles of sewers for 500 miles of streets.

Most immigrant groups set up aid societies to help newcomers from their country. Many city politicians also offered to assist immigrants in exchange for votes. The politicians set up organizations to help new arrivals find housing and work.

### Reading History

#### D. Identifying

**Problems** What problems were politicians trying to solve by offering to help new immigrants?

## Some Americans Oppose Immigration

Some native-born Americans feared that immigrants were too foreign to learn American ways. Others feared that immigrants might come to outnumber natives. As a result, immigrants faced anger and prejudice. **Prejudice** is a negative opinion that is not based on facts. For example,

## CITIZENSHIP TODAY

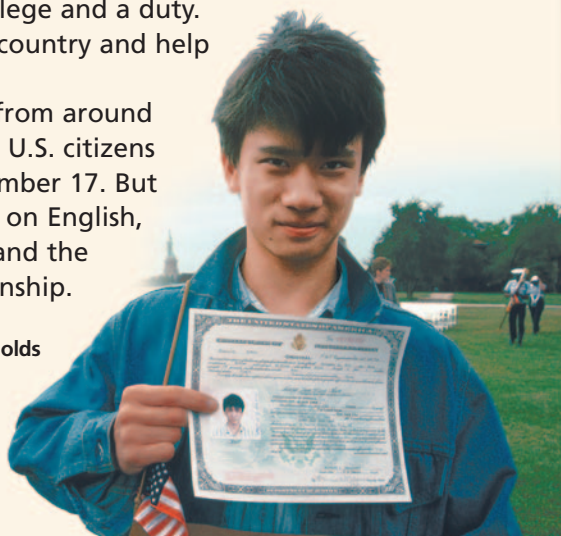
### Becoming a Citizen

Most immigrants who came to America in the 1800s shared one thing: an appreciation for the nation's values and laws. As a result, many chose to become U.S. citizens.

This trend continues today. In recent decades, more than half a million Vietnamese have immigrated to the United States. Many became citizens of their new country. One of them was Lam Ton, who is a successful restaurant owner in Chicago. Ton viewed U.S. citizenship as both a privilege and a duty. "We have to stick to this country and help it do better," he said.

Each year, immigrants from around the world are sworn in as U.S. citizens on Citizenship Day, September 17. But first they must pass a test on English, the U.S. political system, and the rights and duties of citizenship.

This young immigrant proudly holds up his certificate of citizenship.



### How Does Someone Become a Citizen?

1. In a small group, discuss what questions you would ask those seeking to become U.S. citizens.
2. Create a citizenship test using your questions.
3. Have another group take the test and record their scores.
4. Use the McDougal Littell Internet site to link to the actual U.S. citizenship test. Compare it to your test.

 See Citizenship Handbook, page 281.

For more about becoming a U.S. citizen . . .



In 1844, a riot took place between Catholics and non-Catholics in Philadelphia. Several people were killed.



some Protestants in the 1800s believed that Catholics threatened democracy. Those Protestants feared that the Pope, the head of the Roman Catholic Church, was plotting to overthrow democracy in America.

Native-born Americans who wanted to eliminate foreign influence called themselves **nativists**. Some nativists refused to hire immigrants and put up signs like “No Irish need apply.” In cities like New York and Boston, nativists formed a secret society. Members promised not to vote for any Catholics or immigrants running for political office. If asked about their secret group, they said, “I know nothing about it.”

In the 1850s, nativists started a political party. Because of the members’ answers to questions about their party, it was called the Know-Nothing Party. It wanted to ban Catholics and the foreign-born from holding office. It also called for a cut in immigration and a 21-year wait to become an American citizen. The Know-Nothings did elect six governors. But they disappeared quickly as a national party. Their northern and southern branches couldn’t agree on the issue of slavery.

In spite of such barriers as prejudice, the immigrants of the 1800s had a strong impact on American culture. Writers and artists of the 1800s also shaped American culture. Section 2 discusses their influence.

### Background

Protestants feared the Pope because in many European countries, the Catholic Church worked closely with the ruling monarchs.

## Section 1 Assessment

### 1. Terms & Names

**Explain the significance of:**

- emigrant
- immigrant
- steerage
- push-pull factor
- famine
- prejudice
- nativist

### 2. Using Graphics

Use a cluster diagram like the one below to record details about immigration, such as which groups came, where they settled, and how they influenced America.



### 3. Main Ideas

- What were the push-pull factors that led to immigration?
- How did the arrival of so many immigrants affect U.S. cities?
- What was the Know-Nothing Party, and what was its point of view about immigration?

### 4. Critical Thinking

**Analyzing Causes** How did the rapid increase in immigration cause conflict?

#### THINK ABOUT

- why Irish immigrants and free blacks competed for jobs
- the growth of cities and the problems it created
- the prejudices of nativists
- religious differences

#### ACTIVITY OPTIONS

#### TECHNOLOGY

#### ART

Plan a **multimedia presentation** or design a **Web page** that shows immigrants the advantages of settling in the United States.