

Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Immigration and Migration: Visual Materials



"New York - Welcome to the land of freedom," Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, July 2, 1887 (Library of Congress)

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

TL TEACHING LITERACY
TH THROUGH HISTORY

Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Immigration and Migration: Visual Materials

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2012, revised in 2024)

Tim Bailey taught elementary and middle school in Utah for twenty years. Named the 2009 National History Teacher of the Year, he currently serves as the Gilder Lehrman Institute's director of curriculum development and instructional design.

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GRADE LEVEL(S): 3–5

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: Three 45-minute class periods

UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual materials. These skills will enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate visual materials of historical significance.

In these three lessons, students will explore European immigration to the United States, the Great Migration, and the deportation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The visual sources that they examine were created contemporaneously to historical events or to memorialize those events; some are primary sources and some are secondary sources. Students' comprehension will be assessed through activity sheets and a final presentation.

Student will be able to

- Understand and correctly use descriptive vocabulary (e.g., immigration, migration, and deportation)
- Identify moments of historical significance (e.g., when the population or distribution of Americans changed)
- Analyze primary sources including cartoons and paintings
- Discuss interpretations of primary source materials
- Answer a historical question and support their answer with textual and visual evidence from the primary source documents

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What promises has the United States made to immigrants?
- What have people who moved gained by immigrating to or migrating within the United States?
- What hardships have challenged people who moved to or within the United States?
- What hardships have challenged people who were forced to leave the United States?

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.7: Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.1 and 1.B: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information; B. Provide reasons that are supported by facts and details.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4.1 and 1A–C: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on [grade-level] topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly; A. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion; B. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles; C. Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

MATERIALS

- Teacher's Resource: Historical Background: "Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Immigration and Migration" by Grace Peña Delgado, Professor of History, University of California, Santa Cruz (See page 4.)
- Source 1: "Welcome to All," cartoon by J. Keppler, *Puck*, April 28, 1880, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-29012
- Source 2: "The Americanese Wall," cartoon by Raymond O. Evans, *Puck*, March 25, 1916, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-52584
- Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing Art
- Source 3: "New York - Welcome to the Land of Freedom – An Ocean Steamer Passing the Statue of Liberty: Scene on the Steerage Deck," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, July 2, 1887, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-38214
- Source 4: "Immigrants Just Arrived from Foreign Countries - Immigrant Building, Ellis Island, New York Harbor," stereograph, Underwood & Underwood, 1904, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-15539

- Source 5: “Family in Room in Tenement House,” Jessie Tarbox Beals for Jacob Riis, ca. 1910, Jessie Tarbox Beals / Museum of the City of New York, 90.13.3.125
- Activity Sheet 2: Critical Thinking Questions
- Source 6: Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration Series Panel No. 1: During World War I there was a great migration north by southern African Americans*, 1940–1941. Casein tempera on hardboard, 12 x 18 in., The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, acquired 1942, and © 2020 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
- Source 7: “500,000 Mexican Americans Deported,” segment from the *Great Wall of Los Angeles* by Judith Baca © 1976, Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1980, Photo courtesy of SPARC Archives, SPARCinLA.org
- Activity Sheet 3: Critical Thinking Questions
- Activity Sheet 4: Letting Images Tell the Story

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Immigration and Migration

by Grace Peña Delgado, University of California, Santa Cruz

Domestic migration and immigration to the United States provide valuable insights into the country’s fundamental values and aspirations, as well as the contradictions that can undermine them. While the movement of people within the US is largely undertaken for better opportunities, it also reveals persistent problems related to racism and violence. Simultaneously, while the dominant discourse promotes the United States as a “nation of immigrants,” this characterization falls short in capturing America’s complex relationship with many immigrant communities.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 marked a turning point in US immigration policy, as it was the first federal law that prohibited a specific racial group from immigrating to the United States. The act, which barred Chinese laborers from entering the United States, was initially meant to last for ten years but was renewed and made permanent before being repealed in 1943. During the exclusion era, Chinese immigration dropped dramatically. Prior to the act, approximately 300,000 Chinese had entered the United States, mainly for work in the West Coast gold mines and on the Central Pacific Railroad. After the act’s implementation, these numbers dwindled to just a few thousand, primarily those who could claim exempt status, such as diplomats, students, and merchants.

Between 1910 and 1940, Angel Island in San Francisco Bay was a processing site for citizens, visitors, and immigrants arriving or returning from China, Japan, Germany, Russia, the Philippines, Korea, and India. Approximately 300,000 people (70 percent of arrivals) were sent to Angel Island; the other 30 percent were allowed in directly from the ships. As part of the effort to enforce the Chinese Exclusion Act, people from Asia were disproportionately selected for secondary processing, and some were detained for days, weeks, or even years. A detention experience involved grueling interrogations and extended periods of confinement, often in cramped and unsanitary conditions. Yet even within this oppressive environment, some detainees demonstrated acts of resistance. For example, some carved poems into the walls of their barracks, etching their emotions into the very fabric of the place that confined them.

Most European immigrants arriving between 1892 and 1924 landed at the US Immigration Station on Ellis Island in New York Harbor. More than twelve million immigrants went through Ellis Island, and 2 to 6 percent were detained or excluded. Rooted in ethnocentric assumptions, the US immigration system operated on the premise that Europeans were readily assimilable into American society. Such assumptions placed European languages, religious traditions, and social customs on a higher echelon than those of Asian origin. These biases eased European immigrants' pathway to naturalization and assimilation.

Within the context of these racialized immigration policies and institutional favoritism toward Europeans, the Great Migration of Black Americans began during World War I, fundamentally altering the demographic and social contours of the United States. Almost six million Black Americans moved from the rural South to urban centers in the North, Midwest, and West of the United States. The underlying motivations ranged from the pursuit of better economic opportunities to the aspiration for social mobility, and perhaps most significantly, the longing for a life free from racial segregation and Jim Crow laws. Simultaneously, the boll weevil infestation devastated the southern cotton industry, leading to economic hardship for many Black families reliant on agriculture. As a result, the promise of lucrative factory employment in northern cities encouraged migration.

Unfortunately, the movement of Black Americans to northern cities incited racial tensions, culminating in the race riots of the "Red Summer" of 1919. Cities like Chicago, Washington DC, and Elaine, Arkansas, became cauldrons of interracial conflict. The riots were manifestations of deeper societal issues, rooted in longstanding racism and systemic inequalities. It is important to note that these violent outbursts did not deter the Great Migration; rather, they intensified the inner will of Black Americans to strive for better lives.

Similarly, Mexican "repatriation" drives of the 1930s offer another lens to examine the intersections of race, migration, and forced removal in the United States. Federal policy targeted Mexicans and Mexican Americans to protect White employment during the Great Depression. These forced removal campaigns deported approximately one million individuals of Mexican descent from the United States, nearly 60 percent of whom were American citizens. Federal, state, and local governments joined together to forcibly remove Mexicans and Mexican Americans, often through raids and coercion, stripping people of their livelihoods, homes, and families.

Deportation exerted a devastating emotional and psychological toll on Mexican and Mexican American families. While older family members might have retained some of their Mexican heritage, many younger Mexican Americans had been fully acculturated into American society, speaking English and sharing the dreams emblematic of American youth. For these younger family members, "repatriation" was synonymous with exile to a foreign country they hardly knew.

Grace Peña Delgado is a professor of history and director of graduate studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is the author of Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the US-Mexico Borderlands (2012) and co-author of Latino Immigrants in the United States (2011).

European Migration, 1880–1916

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2012, revised in 2024)

OVERVIEW

To motivate their learning, students will carefully analyze two editorial cartoons that illuminate how some people already living in the United States perceived European immigration, especially eastern European immigration, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Then the students will study photographs of immigrants taken when they arrived in America and the living conditions they faced settling in a new country. An art analysis activity sheet and critical thinking questions will help facilitate and demonstrate students' understanding.

MATERIALS

- Teacher's Resource: Historical Background: "Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Immigration and Migration" by Grace Peña Delgado, Professor of History, University of California, Santa Cruz (See page 4.)
- Source 1: "Welcome to All," cartoon by J. Keppler, *Puck*, April 28, 1880, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-29012
- Source 2: "The Americanese Wall," cartoon by Raymond O. Evans, *Puck*, March 25, 1916, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-52584
- Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing Art
- Source 3: "New York - Welcome to the Land of Freedom – An Ocean Steamer Passing the Statue of Liberty: Scene on the Steerage Deck," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, July 2, 1887, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-38214
- Source 4: "Immigrants Just Arrived from Foreign Countries - Immigrant Building, Ellis Island, New York Harbor," stereograph, Underwood & Underwood, 1904, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-15539

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GRADE LEVELS: 3–5

RECOMMENDED TIME FOR COMPLETION: One 45-minute class period

UNIT OVERVIEW: This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History™ (TLTH) resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. Students will learn and practice skills that will help them analyze, assess, and develop knowledgeable and well-reasoned points of view on visual materials. In these three lessons, students will explore European immigration to the United States, the Great Migration, and the deportation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

- Source 5: “Family in room in tenement house,” Jessie Tarbox Beals for Jacob Riis, ca. 1910, Jessie Tarbox Beals / Museum of the City of New York, 90.13.3.125
- Activity Sheet 2: Critical Thinking Questions

PROCEDURE

1. Distribute Source 1: “Welcome to All” and Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing Art to prepare students for a motivating activity.
 - a. Explain to students that immigrants’ experiences often depended upon the good will and resources that people already living in the United States were willing to share.
 - b. The students will closely examine the first cartoon and respond to the questions at the top of the activity sheet. This can be done as a whole-class activity, in small groups, with partners, or individually. If this is one of the class’s first experiences with this kind of analysis, then it should be done as a whole-class activity.
2. Distribute Source 2: “The Americanese Wall.” The students will fill out the bottom half of the activity sheet for this cartoon.
3. Discussion: Ask the students
 - a. What promises did the United States make to immigrants?
 - b. How did the message to potential immigrants to America change in these two illustrations?
 - c. What evidence in the pictures backs up that opinion?
4. Distribute Sources 3–5: “New York – Welcome to the Land of Freedom,” “Immigrants Just Arrived from Foreign Countries,” and “Family in Room in Tenement House.” You may choose to have the students use the Analyzing Art activity sheets with these images if you believe they will benefit from the structured examination.
5. Distribute Activity Sheet 2: Critical Thinking Questions and have the students respond to the questions.
6. Discuss different interpretations developed by the students or student groups. Introduce information from the Historical Background to help them place their interpretations in context.

The Great Migration and Deportation, 1914–1936

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2012, revised in 2024)

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, the students will carefully examine a painting by the artist Jacob Lawrence. They will analyze the visual evidence to understand the issues presented. You will assess their understanding through an activity sheet with critical thinking questions.

MATERIALS

- Source 6: Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration Series Panel No. 1: During World War I there was a great migration north by southern African Americans, 1940–1941*. Casein tempera on hardboard, 12 x 18 in., The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, acquired 1942, and © 2020 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
- Source 7: “500,000 Mexican Americans Deported,” segment from the *Great Wall of Los Angeles* by Judith Baca © 1976, Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1980, Photo courtesy of SPARC Archives, SPARCinLA.org
- Optional: Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing Art
- Activity Sheet 3: Critical Thinking Questions

PROCEDURE

1. To prepare for this class, review the historical background essay written by Prof. Grace Delgado. To further prepare for student questions, you should use encyclopedia articles about two historical events: the Great Migration and the Great Depression–era deportation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans.
2. Explain to students that historians use two different types of sources: primary sources and secondary sources. Primary sources are created at approximately the same time as the events that they describe or depict. Secondary sources are created by people who reflect upon and explain historical events. Today’s

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lesson invites students to explore paintings that are secondary sources. You may choose to use Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing Art to support student analysis of Sources 6 and 7.

3. Distribute Source 6: *The Migration Series Panel #1* and Activity Sheet 3: Critical Thinking Questions. The students will answer the first two questions posed on the activity sheet. This can be done as a whole-class, in small groups, with partners, or individually. This painting is the first panel in a series that tells the story of African American migration from the South to the North in the early twentieth century.
4. Distribute “500,000 Mexican Americans Deported” from the *Great Wall of Los Angeles*. The students will complete the last three questions on Activity Sheet 3. The mural portrays the history of California, and this particular section depicts the forced removal of hundreds of thousands of Mexicans and Mexican Americans during the Great Depression.
5. Discuss different interpretations developed by the students or student groups. Introduce information from the Historical Background to help them place their interpretations in context.

Immigration, Migration, and Deportation, 1880–1936

BY TIM BAILEY (created in 2024)

OVERVIEW

In this lesson students will review information that you covered in the previous two lessons. You will assess their understanding through their ability to use the images as evidence to support their chosen topic.

MATERIALS

- Source 1: “Welcome to All,” cartoon by J. Keppler, *Puck*, April 28, 1880, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-29012
- Source 2: “The Americanese Wall,” cartoon by Raymond O. Evans, *Puck*, March 25, 1916, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-52584
- Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing Art
- Source 3: “New York - Welcome to the Land of Freedom – An Ocean Steamer Passing the Statue of Liberty: Scene on the Steerage Deck,” *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper*, July 2, 1887, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-38214
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- Source 5: “Family in Room in Tenement House,” Jessie Tarbox Beals for Jacob Riis, ca. 1910, Jessie Tarbox Beals / Museum of the City of New York, 90.13.3.125
- Activity Sheet 2: Critical Thinking Questions
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- Source 7: “500,000 Mexican Americans Deported,” segment from the *Great Wall of Los Angeles* by Judith Baca © 1976, Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1980, Photo courtesy of SPARC Archives, SPARCinLA.org
- Activity Sheet 3: Critical Thinking Questions
- Activity Sheet 4: Letting Images Tell the Story

PROCEDURE

1. Students should be organized into groups of three or four to prepare group presentations using Sources 1–7 from the previous two lessons.
2. Each student group will give an oral presentation focused on what they have learned about immigration by using 3–4 of the images to present on one of five possible topics:
 - Coming to America
 - It Wasn’t Easy for Immigrants
 - Immigration Changed over Time
 - Becoming an American
 - Living in America after Immigrating
3. Distribute Activity Sheet 4 for students to select their topic and the 3–4 images that they wish to use in their presentation.
4. They will use the bottom half of Activity Sheet 4 to outline and describe their presentation.
5. Each student in the group should have a role in the presentation.
6. Remind students that all presentations should start with stating the theme of the presentation and use the images to provide evidence to support the theme that they selected. They should then expand on what they know about each image and how it relates to the topic they selected.

Source 1: "Welcome to All"



"Welcome to All," by J. Keppler, Puck, April 28, 1880. (Library of Congress)

Source 2: "The Americanese Wall"



**THE AMERICANESE WALL, AS CONGRESSMAN
BURNETT WOULD BUILD IT.**

UNCLE SAM: You're welcome in—if you can climb it!

"The Americanese Wall," by Raymond O. Evans, Puck, March 25, 1916. (Library of Congress)

Name _____

Period _____

Date _____

Activity Sheet 1: Analyzing Art

Title of Piece: _____

Artist/Credited to: _____

Setting of the Piece: _____

What is the significance of the central figure(s) or object(s)?

What action is taking place in the piece?

What mood or tone is created by the image, and what is creating that mood or tone?

What is the artist's message to the viewer?

Title of Piece: _____

Artist/Credited to: _____

Setting of the Piece: _____

What is the significance of the central figure(s) or object(s)?

What action is taking place in the piece?

What mood or tone is created by the image, and what is creating that mood or tone?

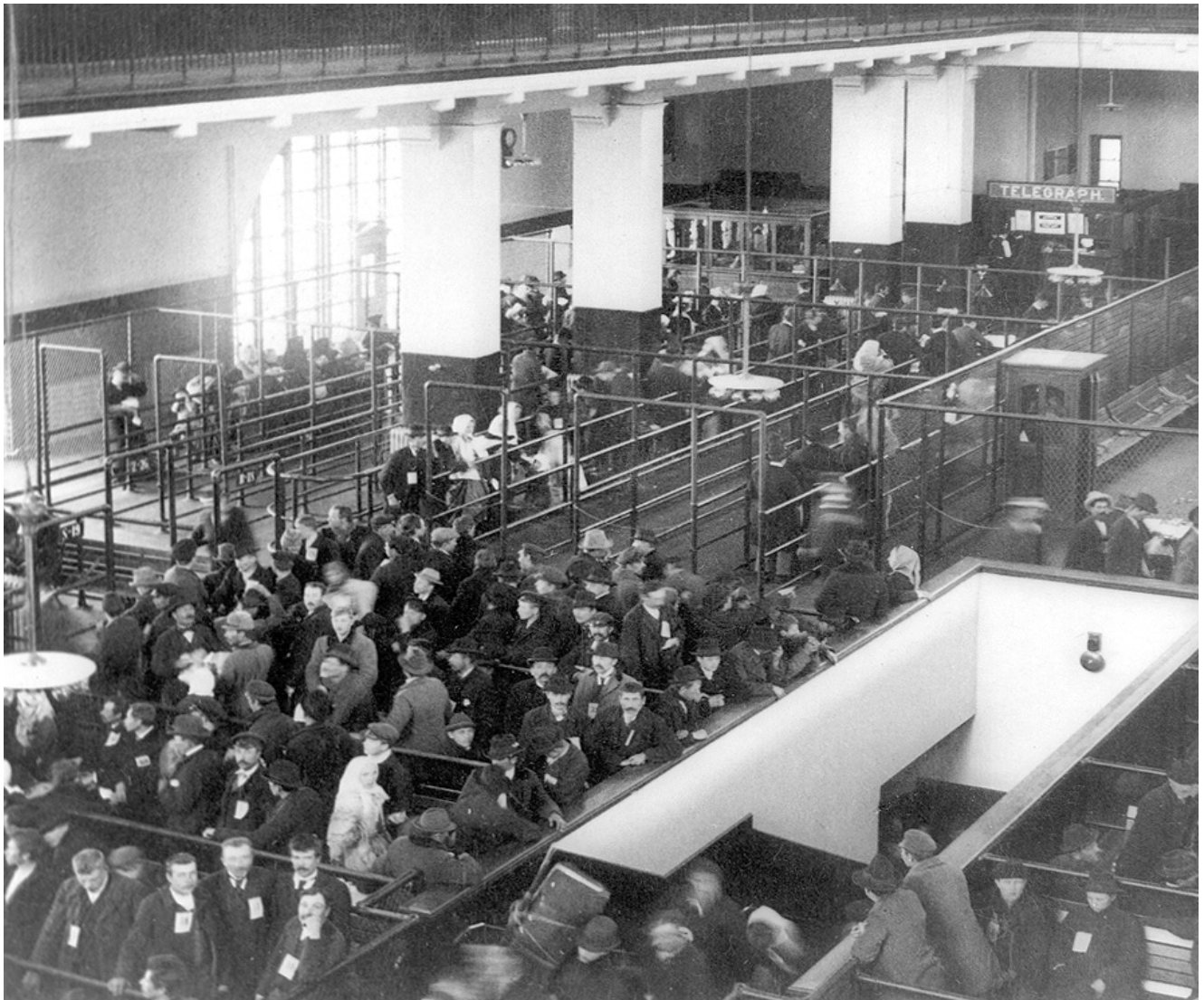
What is the artist's message to the viewer?

Source 3: “New York – Welcome to the Land of Freedom”



*“New York – Welcome to the Land of Freedom,” Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, July 2, 1887.
(Library of Congress)*

Source 4: “Immigrants Just Arrived from Foreign Countries”



“Immigrants just arrived from Foreign Countries – Immigrant Building, Ellis Island, New York Harbor,” Underwood & Underwood, 1904. (Library of Congress)

Source 5: “Family in Room in Tenement House”



*“Family in Room in Tenement House,” by Jessie Tarbox Beals for Jacob Riis, ca. 1910.
(Jessie Tarbox Beals / Museum of the City of New York)*

Activity Sheet 2: Critical Thinking Questions

Remember to use evidence from the pictures in your answers.

How did most European immigrants get to America? _____

How many women do you see in the photograph “Immigrants Just Arrived from Foreign Countries”? What information could this give us about new immigrants?

Does it appear that it was easy for the immigrants in the images to become new American citizens? What evidence do you see?

Using evidence from the photograph, what were some of the difficulties of living in a tenement at the turn of the century?

Do you think most of the new immigrants were rich or poor? What evidence do you see?

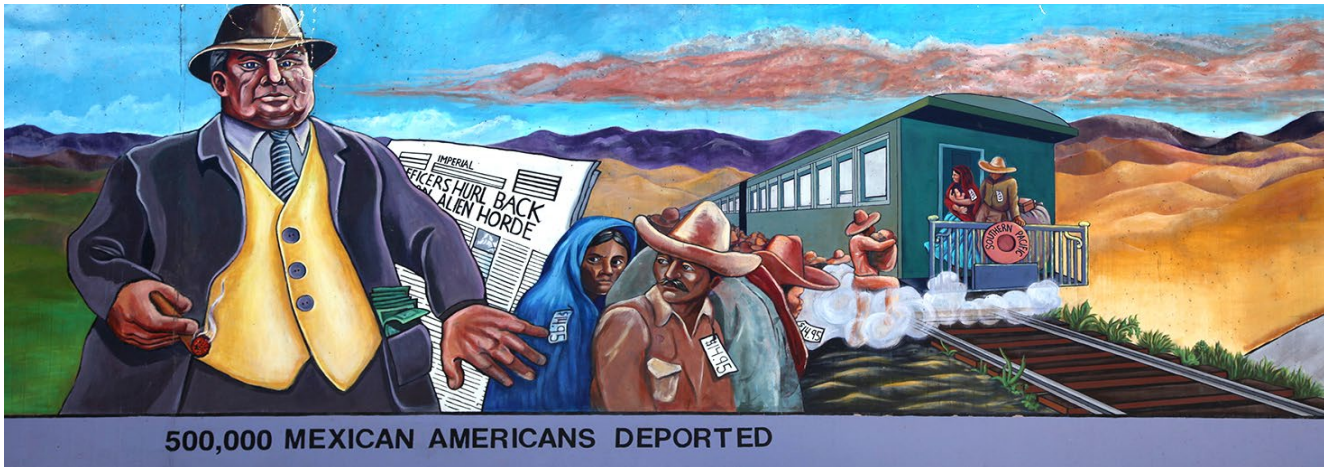
Which of these pictures gives you the best idea of what it was like to be an immigrant to the United States at that time? Remember to explain your answer using evidence from the picture.

Source 6: *The Migration Series Panel No. 1*



Jacob Lawrence, The Migration Series Panel No. 1: During World War I there was a great migration north by southern African Americans, 1940–1941. Casein tempera on hardboard, 12 x 18 in., The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, acquired 1942, and © 2020 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Source 7: “500,000 Mexican Americans Deported”



“500,000 Mexican Americans Deported,” from the Great Wall of Los Angeles by Judith F. Baca © 1976.

Photo courtesy of SPARC Archives, SPARCinLA.org

Activity Sheet 3: Critical Thinking Questions

Remember to use evidence from the pictures in your answers.

Source 6

Most of the people in the Migration Series painting lived in states such as Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Which direction are they traveling in this painting? (Use a map to check your answer.)

Many of the people shown in the Migration Series painting lived in small towns or on farms in the southern states. What else can we tell about them from this painting?

Source 7

In the mural "500,000 Mexican Americans Deported," what does the headline of the newspaper tell us is happening?

What do the people in the mural have in common, and what clues do we have about who is being deported?

Describe the person on the left side of the mural. Why do you think he is there? Use evidence to support your answer.
