Late 19th- and Early 20th-Century Immigration and Migration: History through Art

(Grades 6-12)

"Welcome to All," Puck*, April 28, 1880. (Library of Congress)*

THE GILDER LEHRMAN INSTITUTE of AMERICAN HISTORY

TEACHING LITERACY THROUGH HISTORY

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Late 19th- and Early 20th-Century Immigration and Migration: History through Art

BY TIM BAILEY

UNIT OVERVIEW

This unit is one of the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Teaching Literacy through History resources, designed to align with the Common Core State Standards. These units were developed to enable students to understand, summarize, and evaluate original materials of historical significance. Through a step-by-step process, students will acquire the skills to analyze and assess primary sources and develop well-reasoned viewpoints about them.

In these three lessons, students will explore European and Asian immigration to the United States, the Great Migration, and deportation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries using paired graphic and textual sources. They will analyze a memoir, a poem, and letters written by immigrants, migrants, and deportees, and photographs and art representing related events. Their comprehension will be assessed through activity sheets and an argumentative essay using textual and visual evidence to support an argument.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary source documents and works of art
- Draw conclusions about and discuss interpretations of the primary source materials
- Support their point of view on a historical question using textual and graphic evidence from the primary source documents
- Write an argumentative essay in response to a prompt

NUMBER OF CLASS PERIODS: 2–3

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6–12

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.9: Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.WHST.6-8.1.a: Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content. b. Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

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CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

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OVERVIEW

Students will look at images, letters, a memoir, and a poem reflecting the experiences of a selection immigrants and migrants in the United States between 1906 and 1934. They will closely examine the images and texts and responded to questions to help them understand and assess their meaning and the history behind them. Their comprehension may be assessed through their completed activity sheets and classroom discussion.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Analyze primary source documents and works of arts
- Draw conclusions about and discuss interpretations of the primary source materials

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Adapted from "Immigration, Migration, and the Wider World, 1891–1924" and "Immigration Restriction and Americans' Freedom to Move, 1924–1965," in *Freedom to Move: Immigration and Migration in US History* (New York: The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2013), 94, 102, and 120.

More than eighteen million new immigrants entered the United States between 1890 and 1920. Their motives for migrating differed little from those of earlier emigrants—they sought safety, asylum, opportunity, homes, happiness, and work.

The search for work brought to the United States Italians, Finns, Poles, Japanese, Filipinos, Mexicans, Canadians, and eastern and southern Europeans. Russian Jews, in defiance of Czarist prohibitions against emigration, fled religious persecution and violent pogroms. Koreans resisted Japanese colonization, and, after 1910, Mexicans escaped revolution at home.

Later, these immigrants would be celebrated as builders of the American nation. At the time, however, Americans sought to limit their right to enter the United States. In 1896, the newly founded Immigration Restriction League demanded the exclusion of illiterate immigrants. In 1902, Congress excluded anarchists and violent revolutionaries. In 1906, it required all naturalizing immigrants to know English. In 1908, the State Department procured an agreement with Japan to stop the migration of new Japanese laborers (although those already in the United States could bring over wives). Exclusionary laws were also imposed on other Asian groups, most notably the Chinese but also Koreans. In 1910, the new immigrant station at Angel Island in San Francisco joined Ellis Island in sifting desirable from undesirable immigrants.

Immigrants to the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had experiences that were as varied as the nations from which they came. Most immigrants during this time period, whether arriving from Europe or from Asia, came by ship. Many landed at Ellis Island in New York Harbor and Angel Island in San Francisco Bay, but there were processing stations elsewhere. Once in the United States, immigrants had to pass through an examination process that has been described in terms ranging from confrontational and agonizing to easy and agreeable.

The National Origins Quota Act of 1924, which took effect in 1929, reduced to 150,000 per year the number of visas available to immigrants from Europe, with most slots reserved for northern and western Europeans. After 1929 foreigners, mainly from Europe, responded by evading restrictions of the act. Restricting the freedom to move across borders sparked massive new migrations. Significantly, the United States did not restrict immigration from its immediate neighbors in the Americas. Fearing to insult the country's Latin American allies but also responding to western growers' demands for Mexican labor, Congress in 1924 had imposed no numerical quotas on Western Hemisphere countries. Mexicans and Canadians—who in the years before 1910 had constituted less than 3 percent

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of all immigrants—soon constituted a third of the diminishing numbers of new arrivals. Over time, New York City and Miami attracted sizable migrations from the English-speaking islands of the Caribbean and from Puerto Rico, the island territory acquired in 1898 from Spain.

During this same period, African Americans could and did find ways to escape the Jim Crow South, where they were subjected to violence and political and economic discrimination. They migrated north in search of better opportunities for work and schools where their children could receive the same education as whites. Only a quarter of a million left the South between 1890 and 1910, however, and that left 89 percent of African Americans under Jim Crow rule. Only when World War I sharply diminished the willingness of Europeans to risk transatlantic travel did the "great migration" of African Americans to northern cities and industrial jobs begin. Almost a million moved north between 1910 and 1930. Once again, African American migrants imagined themselves as journeying toward freedom.

During several Depression years, more foreigners left than entered the United States. The effects of the economic depression of the 1930s were especially severe for Mexican immigrants who had worked in factories and agricultural and building jobs in the West. One third of the Mexican population in the United States, over 500,000 people, was deported or repatriated between 1931 and 1934. Over 60 percent were native-born US citizens.

MATERIALS

- Activity Sheets
  - Analyzing Art
  - In Their Own Words
- European Immigration
  - "Welcome to All," cartoon by J. Keppler, *Puck*, April 28, 1880, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-29012.
  - "Arriving at Ellis Island" excerpt from Aaron Domnitz, "Why I Left My Old Home and What I Have Accomplished in America," in *My Future Is in America: Autobiographies of Eastern European Immigrants*, ed. and trans. Jocelyn Cohen and Daniel Soyer (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 138–139.
- Asian Immigration
  - "Testing an Asian Immigrant" at the Angel Island immigration station, San Francisco, 1931, National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health.
  - "A Night at the Immigration Station" by Choi Kyung Sik, 1925, in © Charles Egan, 2020, *Voices of Angel Island: Inscriptions and Immigrant Poetry, 1910–194*5 (Bloomsbury Academic / Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2020).
- Migration and Deportation
  - Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration Series Panel No. 1: During World War I there was a great migration north by southern African Americans*, 1940–1941, The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, © 2012. The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation, Seattle/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
  - Letter from Cleveland Gailliard to the Bethlehem Baptist Association, April 1, 1917, Carter G. Woodson Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.
  - "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.
  - Translation of a letter from Pablo Guerrero to Los Angeles County, May 28, 1934, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

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PROCEDURE

1. Distribute "Welcome to All" and the "Analyzing Art" activity sheet. The cartoon reflects the welcome extended to immigrants of the 1880s and the concept of America as a land of freedom and opportunity, a safe refuge from the oppression of European monarchs. The signs read: "Free education, free land, free speech, free ballot, free lunch." and "No oppressive taxes, no expensive kings, no compulsory military service, no knouts or dungeons."
2. The students will closely examine the immigration cartoon from 1880 and analyze it using the activity sheet. This can be done as a whole-class activity with discussion, in small groups, with partners, or individually. If this is one of the students' first experiences examining an image like this one, it should be done as a whole-class activity.
3. Distribute "Arriving at Ellis Island" by Aaron Domnitz and the "In Their Own Words" activity sheet.
4. "Share read" the texts with the students by having them follow along silently while you begin to read aloud, modeling prosody, inflection, and punctuation. Then ask the class to join in with the reading while you continue to read aloud, still serving as the model. This technique will support struggling readers as well as English language learners (ELL).
5. The students will then closely read Domnitz's description of his examination at Ellis Island in 1906 and answer the questions on the activity sheet. Reconvene the class to share the students' or student groups' responses.
6. Distribute "Testing an Asian Immigrant" and "Analyzing Art." The photograph shows an Asian immigrant receiving a medical examination at the Immigration Station on Angel Island, San Francisco, California, in 1931. The students will respond to the questions on the activity sheet to help them examine and interpret what is happening in the photograph.
7. Distribute "A Night at the Immigration Station" by Choi Kyung Sik, a Korean immigrant, and "In Their Own Words." Share read the poem with the students as described above. The students will analyze the poem and fill out the activity sheet. Reconvene the class to discuss the students' or student groups' responses to the photograph and the poem.
8. You may choose to complete the next two pairs of images and readings in the next class or assign them for homework.
9. Distribute "Migration Series Panel #1" by Jacob Lawrence and "Analyzing Art." This is the first of a series of paintings by Jacob Lawrence about the migration of African Americans from the rural South to the industrial North.
10. Distribute Cleveland Gailliard's letter and "In Their Own Words" and share read the letter written by an African American man interested in moving to Chicago in 1917.
11. Distribute "500,000 Mexican Americans Deported" and "Analyzing Art." The art is a portion of a 2,754-foot mural depicting the history of Los Angeles.
12. Distribute Pablo Guerrero's letter, a man deported to Mexico in 1931, and "In Their Own Words" and share read the letter with the class.
13. As students or student groups share out their responses, discuss different interpretations developed by the students or student groups. Introduce information from the Historical Background to supplement and place in context the knowledge the students' gained from studying the primary sources.

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LESSON 3

OVERVIEW

Students will review their work with primary source texts and images from the previous lesson(s) and take a point of view on an essay prompt. They will write an argumentative essay using evidence from the texts and images to support their point of view.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to

- Support their point of view on a historical question using textual and graphic evidence from the primary source documents
- Write an argumentative essay in response to a prompt

MATERIALS

- Completed Activity Sheets from the previous lesson(s)
- Primary Sources from the previous lessons
    - "Welcome to All," cartoon by J. Keppler, *Puck*, April 28, 1880 from the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-29012.
    - "Arriving at Ellis Island" excerpt from Aaron Domnitz, "Why I Left My Old Home and What I Have Accomplished in America," in *My Future Is in America: Autobiographies of Eastern European Immigrants*, ed. and trans. Jocelyn Cohen and Daniel Soyer (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 138–139.
    - "Testing an Asian Immigrant" at the Angel Island immigration station, San Francisco; 1931. Photograph courtesy of the National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health.
    - "A Night at the Immigration Station" by Choi Kyung Sik, 1925, in © Charles Egan, 2020, *Voices of Angel Island: Inscriptions and Immigrant Poetry, 1910–194*5 (Bloomsbury Academic / Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2020).
    - Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration Series Panel No. 1: During World War I there was a great migration north by southern African Americans, 1940–1941*, The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, © 2020 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
    - Letter from Cleveland Gailliard to the Bethlehem Baptist Association, April 1, 1917, Carter G. Woodson Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division
    - "500,000 Mexican Americans Deported" from the *Great Wall of Los Angeles* by Judith Baca © 1976, Social and Public Art Resource Center, 1980.
    - Translation of a letter from Pablo Guerrero to Los Angeles County, May 28, 1934. (Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors)
- In Context, which provides information about Aaron Domnitz, Choi Kyung Sik, Cleveland Gailliard, and Pablo Guerrero from *Freedom to Move: Immigration and Migration in US History* (New York: The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2013), 94, 102, and 120.
- Essay Prompts

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PROCEDURE

1. If you assigned the Migration and Deportation sections for homework, have students share out their responses to the questions on the activity sheets.
2. All of the students should have copies of the primary sources as well as their completed activity sheets.
3. Distribute "In Context." Students should read through this information to round out their understanding of the important issues during this period and the stories of the individuals featured in this unit.
4. Students will now write an argumentative essay defending or refuting a statement about immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The students should select one of the statements or you may assign the prompt of your choice. The essay questions have been arranged from the most literal to the more inferential. Students must support their answers with evidence from the primary sources they have analyzed over the past two lessons.
5. Student essays can be completed in class or finished outside of class.

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NAME PERIOD DATE

Analyzing Art

Title of Piece: _____

Artist/Credited to: _____

Setting of the Image: _____

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

_____

_____

_____

_____

What action is taking place?

_____

_____

_____

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

_____

_____

_____

What is the artist's message to the viewer?

_____

_____

_____

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NAME PERIOD DATE

In Their Own Words

Author: _____

When was it written? _____

Where was it written? _____

What clues in the text reveal why it was written?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What mood or tone is created by the author, and what words create that mood or tone?

_____

_____

_____

_____

What can you conclude about the author's situation?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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European Immigration: Image

"Welcome to All," Puck*, April 28, 1880. (Library of Congress)*

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European Immigration: Text

"Arriving at Ellis Island" by Aaron Domnitz, 1906

My first contact with my new country was the brief conversation between me and the immigration officials. We were put into short lines as we entered the large buildings at Ellis Island. Each line had to go by a small table next to which officials sat who questioned each immigrant in his language. The new immigrant felt right at home. My line spoke Yiddish. Hence, a big, strange country recognized my language that I had brought here with me from abroad as an official language. In Russia and Germany, I did not receive any such privilege.

One official asked me what I would do in America. I told him that until then I had been a Hebrew teacher. He smiled, "A rebbe?" "No." I said, "A teacher!"

A second official called out, "What's the difference?" I explained that a "rebbe" is Hasidic. They laughed at me. "Go, go," they said, "you'll be a great rebbe in America," and pushed me aside. I looked around. Here I am on the other side of the railing, among those who had been let in. But why did they laugh at me? It's nothing. People are good natured here and they were joking. I liked the reception.

Source: "Why I Left My Old Home and What I Have Accomplished in America," in *My Future Is in America: Autobiographies of Eastern European Immigrants*, ed. and trans. Jocelyn Cohen and Daniel Soyer (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 138–139.

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Asian Immigration: Image

"Testing an Asian immigrant" at the Angel Island immigration station, San Francisco, 1931. (National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health)

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Asian Immigration: Text

"A Night at the Immigration Station" by Choi Kyung Sik, 1925

This tired traveler
Has crossed a vast ocean—
Why must I sleep behind iron bars?
The rain cries out and wakes me up
Because it pities me.
Angel Island, sleeping tight,
No matter whether you hear this song or not,
It is the complaint of a foreign guest
Whose whole heart is burning.

Even though it's said America is wonderful,
How pathetic it has made me,
If my mother knew about this,
How shocked she would be.
This border created by rascals—
When can it be broken?
I hope people all over the world
Will become brothers soon.

Source: © Charles Egan, 2020, *Voices of Angel Island: Inscriptions and Immigrant Poetry, 1910–1945*, Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

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Migration and Deportation: Image

Migration Series Panel #1 *by Jacob Lawrence, 1940–1941, The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC. © 2020 The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.*

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Letter from Cleveland Gailliard to the Bethlehem Baptist Association, April 1, 1917

Mobile Ala April 1st, 1917

The Bethlehem Baptist Association

I take pain to pen you a few lines for Information about coming North and I see your advertisement in the Chicago Defender and I am verry fond of the Defender I get it every week when I can and I like to read it and I am a colored young man in need of a position because I have a family to support and I am out off a job and I can't get nothing to do to Support them. I have been out of a job for five months or more and have been sick to bed. I am up again thanks to the good Lord and I am a member of Stone Street Baptist Church the oldest Baptist church in the South and I am 31 years old and I can fill the Position as a porter in a grocery store or run an elevator or drive a team or do most anything and I would for the association to please help me get up their please and get me a position please and I will pay you the expenses back When I get up their and got to work and I will work. I was working here for the New Orleans Mobile & Chicago RR running the Elevator and cleaning up and they want me to work night and day for the same amount of salary which was only $20.00 per month and so I quit and I have been looking ever since last Nov. so this is all at the present from

Cleveland Gailliard

Direct your letter
(Gen. Del.) Post Office,
Mobile, Ala.

Source: Carter G. Woodson Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division

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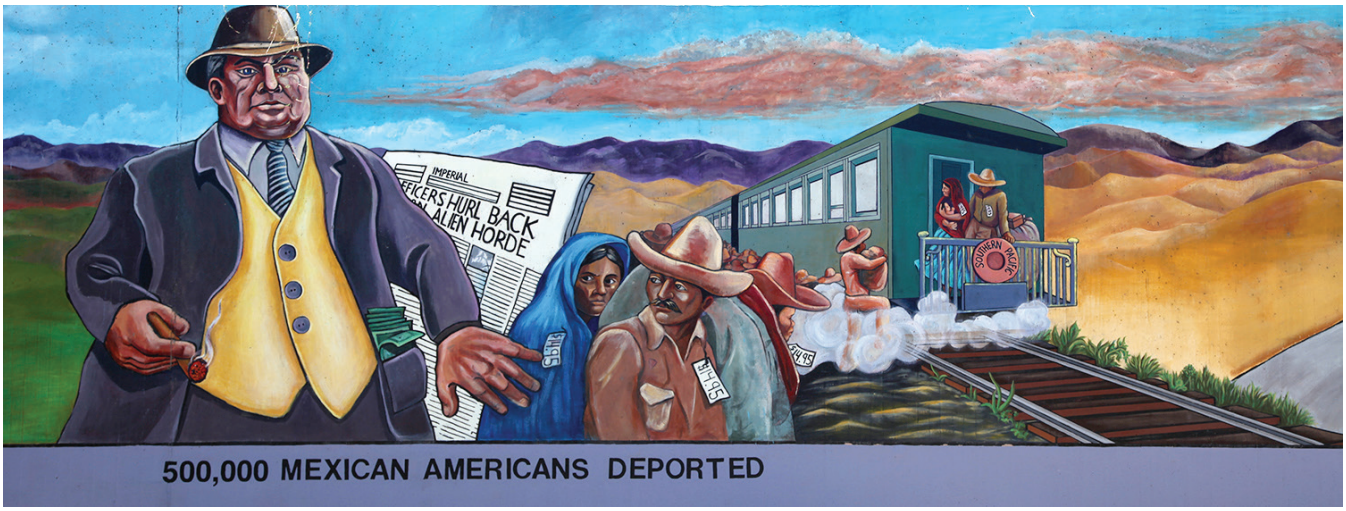
Migration and Deportation: Image



"500,000 Mexican Americans Deported," from the Great Wall of Los Angeles *by Judith F. Baca © 1976. Photo courtesy of SPARC Archives, SPARCinLA.org*

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Migration and Deportation: Text

A Letter from Pablo Guerrero to Los Angeles County, May 28, 1934

L.A. County 5/28/34. Mexicali, Low. Calif. Mexico

Los Angeles, Cfa.

By these presents I hereby make it known that my family and myself were deported into Mexico on 12/8/32, on the S.P. trains that left Los Angeles, Calif., and in view of the fact that all of my children were born in the U.S. of A., they do not like the Mexican customs and wish to return to the U.S. in company with their parents and ask the Los Angeles County authorities, as a favor, to address the Department of Labor in Washington, requesting that the American Consulate in Mexicali. Low. Cfa. be ordered to grant me immigration papers, paying the $18.00 dollars for each Pass-Port.

I want to arrange everything legally; I do not wish to violate the frontier Immigration Law, and I want my Passport issued with the seal of an American citizen. I worked in the U.S. of A. since 1904 with different companies. I registered in the world war in Johnston, Arizona, Cochise Co. I have never given my services to the Mexican government nor to Mexican capital. I have worked all of my life, since I was 19 years of age in the U.S. of A., and that is why I wish to return to the country where I am entitled to live with my children so that they be educated in the schools of your country and not in Mexico.

Besides, the Mexican Government here does not give any assistance nor protection to children born in the U.S. of A., and for that reason I ask that my children and myself be allowed to return to the country in which they are entitled to live.

Source: Permission granted by the County of Los Angeles

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In Context

Aaron Domnitz: "Arriving at Ellis Island," 1906

On January 1, 1892, the Ellis Island Immigration Station opened in New York Harbor, under the aegis of the federal government, to process the growing number of immigrants arriving from Europe. Immigrants to the United States were required to pass medical examinations and interviews and supply proof that family or a job awaited them.

Aaron Domnitz, born in 1884 in a village in Belarus (western Russia), was an eager and diligent student. He graduated from a yeshiva (Jewish school) and taught Hebrew studies. By 1905 he had traveled to the city of Minsk and became aware of political unrest. He joined a socialist Bund and witnessed escalating violence between young reformers and Russian authorities. However, his main reasons for leaving were that he had been overcome by restlessness and wished to escape the constricted Russian society that denied his culture.

Domnitz was met by a cousin, with whom he lived in the Bronx. He held jobs successively as a plumber and a tailor and pursued a degree to become a dentist. He then moved to Baltimore and worked as a dentist and raised a family. The arc of Domnitz's life replicated that of many immigrants who found a first home with relatives, got jobs with assistance from religious or social agencies, and pursued higher education as a springboard to opportunity and prosperity in the United States.

"A Night at the Immigration Station," by Choi Kyung Sik, 1925

The passage of the Immigration Act of 1924 barred entry of all Asians to the United States, with the exception of students who had obtained visas from an American consulate. In 1925, Korean-born Choi Kyung Sik received a Japanese passport from a US consulate. Armed with these documents, Kyung Sik sailed from Yokohama to San Francisco. A graduate of Chosen Christian College in Korea, Kyung Sik also carried a letter attesting to financial support and admission to De Pauw University. After reviewing these papers at Angel Island, the Board of Special Inquiry allowed him to proceed, noting that he spoke English and was qualified as a student. Kyung Sik spent only one night on Angel Island, while many other prospective immigrants spent weeks and even months waiting to be cleared for entry into the United States. During that lonely night on Angel Island he wrote a poem lamenting the frightening experience. When the Angel Island facility was renovated many years later dozens such poems were found written and carved on the walls of the holding areas.

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Cleveland Gailliard's Letter, 1917

During the Great Migration more than a million African Americans moved from the southern United States to the urban centers of the North and Midwest. Many African Americans wrote to organizations and newspapers in the North seeking assistance. The *Chicago Defender*, a Black paper founded in 1905, was read extensively in the South and actively supported the migrations. It served as a clearinghouse for information about the North, printing tips on job listings and housing in Chicago. Most letter writers cited virulent racism and poverty as their reasons for migrating.

This letter was written by Cleveland Gailliard of Mobile, Alabama, in 1917. He was responding to an advertisement that the Bethlehem Baptist Association in Chicago had placed in the *Chicago Defender*. He asked the association to help find him a position and to send money for his trip to Chicago, which he promised to repay as soon as he got a job. At least 110,000 African Americans migrated to Chicago between 1916 and 1918, nearly tripling the city's Black population.

Pablo Guerrero's Letter, 1934

The effects of the nationwide economic depression of the 1930s were especially severe for Mexican immigrants who had worked in factories, agricultural, and building jobs in the West. Overburdened relief agencies in Los Angeles collaborated with representatives of the Mexican consulate to repatriate thousands of immigrant workers back to Mexico. Charitable agencies assisted destitute Mexicans to board southbound trains. The County of Los Angeles started programs of deportation of unemployed workers and their families.

Most Mexicans who were forcibly returned to Mexico endured increasing poverty and few opportunities to make a living. Among this group was Pablo Guerrero, who tried to return to the United States. In 1934, Los Angeles County officials received a letter from Guerrero, who had been repatriated in 1932. He requested immigrant status for his wife and children, all of whom had been born in the United States. County officials did not grant his request. The Mexican population of Los Angeles decreased by 30 percent between 1930 and 1935.

Essay Prompts

Defend or refute one of the following statements. Remember to use evidence taken from the primary sources to back up your arguments.

1. People immigrate because they believe that they can find a better job if they move.
2. Most immigrants who came to America found it a fairly simple and humane process.
3. The US government makes immigration policy based on what is best for the country, not on what is best for immigrants.
4. The United States of America is a land of opportunity.
5. Race is not a determining factor in United States immigration policy.

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