Immigration

The United States of America has long been the world's chief receiving nation for immigrants. An immigrant is a person who leaves his/her country to settle and remain in a new country. Over the years, many millions of people have uprooted and left family and friends to move to America. Some felt forced to come because they feared for their lives. Their countries were at war or they didn't have the freedom to say and practice their faith. Most, however, came for a better life. Their countries didn't have work or they were starving because there wasn't enough food. Whatever the reason, immigrants in history gave up everything they had to take a chance on a new world and a new life.

The United States has seen four waves of immigration throughout its history. The first period was from the 1600s through 1775. This group included the first colonists and settlers of the United States. Most of these immigrants were from England. Others arrived from France, Germany, Ireland, Scotland and Spain. Many of these colonists came here looking for economic opportunity. They wanted better land to farm or better work. Others came to escape religious **persecution**.[1] Some were even **convicts**[2] transported from English jails. This first wave also included West Africans that came to America against their will. They were captured, sold into slavery and shipped to the United States.

A second wave of American immigration took place from 1820-1870. Over seven million people made the voyage to America, mostly from northern and western Europe. About a third of these immigrants were Irish people trying to

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[1] **persecution** – the act of continually treating someone cruelly and unfairly
[2] **convicts** – persons serving a prison sentence

escape a **famine**[3] that struck their country in the mid-1840s. Almost a third was German. The Chinese also began to immigrate during this time. They got word of a Gold Rush in California. They came to work in the mines and get rich.

This flood of immigrants wasn't always welcome by those already in America. Some feared these newcomers would take away their jobs. Others didn't like the politics or customs and religions the new immigrants brought with them. For example, many Irish were **discriminated**[4] against for being Roman Catholic. The Chinese also suffered greatly from discrimination.

A growing number of people demanded laws to make it harder for foreigners to become American citizens. In 1875, Congress passed its first immigration law. It kept undesirables out, such as convicts. In 1882, Congress also passed the Chinese **Exclusion**[5] Act. It prohibited Chinese workers from coming to the United States. A few years later, other laws were passed. One required adult immigrants be able to read and write. Another limited the number of immigrants from countries outside the Western Hemisphere. In 1965, a law was passed ending these limits based on nationality.

The third wave of US immigration was by far the greatest. Over 23 million people immigrated to the United States between 1881 and 1920. These new Americans came from countries in Southern and Eastern Europe. Once the Great Depression hit in 1930, however, immigration took a sharp decline. There were actually more people leaving America than coming to America during this time.

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[3] **famine** – a serious lack of food in a place
[4] **discriminated** – treated differently or unfairly because of a person's race, age, or gender
[5] **exclusion** – the state of being kept out or shut out

The fourth wave of immigration began in 1965 and continues today. Most immigrants come from Asian countries as well as South American, Caribbean countries, and Mexico. A large number of these immigrants settle in the East and Midwest. However, many others move to Florida and California.

Name: _____   Date:_____

1. The United States

    a. takes in the least amount of immigrants in the world.
    b. no longer allows immigration.
    c. takes in the highest number of immigrants in the world.
    d. only takes in immigrants from Ireland.

2. Which of the following is NOT an immigrant?

    a. Aunt Betty came to live with my family after leaving Canada.
    b. Hector came on an illegal boat from Cuba. He lives in Miami now.
    c. Natalia came to New York to study acting. When she graduates, she will return to Latvia.
    d. Young Na was only two months old when her parents moved here from Korea.

3. What is the main difference between immigrants coming to America in the 1st wave and the 4th wave?

    a. They were younger in the first wave
    b. In the first wave, Africans were forced to come to America against their will
    c. The Colonists didn't consider themselves immigrants
    d. No Europeans come to America anymore

4. What would best describe the United States' attitude toward immigrants during the late 1800's?

    a. Generous
    b. Unfriendly
    c. Upbeat
    d. Murderous

5. The passage "Immigrants" is mainly about

    a. which countries let in the most immigrants, and why
    b. the history of people coming to the United States from other countries
    c. why someone would want to leave their home country behind
    d. all of the difficulties immigrants had when they arrived to the United States

6. Explain why people would or would not want to place limits on immigration to this country.

_____

_____

_____

7. What did Congress do related to immigration in 1875?

_____

_____

_____

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

_____the United States economy was very bad during the Great Depression more people left the United States than came in.

     a. Although
     b. As a result
     c. Because
     d. However

9. Today, most immigrants come to the United States from Asia, South America, the Caribbean, and Mexico.

Who? most immigrants

When? _____

(do) What? _____

(from) Where? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word**: discriminate: to choose in favor or against a person or thing based on the basis of which group, class, or category they belong to.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

_____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 790

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: Immigrants leave behind everything to move to a new country. The United States has been a destination for many immigrants, who have mainly arrived during four different time periods.

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c. why someone would want to leave their home country behind
d. all of the difficulties immigrants had when they arrived to the United
    States

6. Explain why people would or would not want to place limits on immigration to
    this country.

> **Suggested answer**: Answers may vary but could include that no limits
> should be placed on immigration because everyone should be able to seek
> a better life. Alternatively, students may answer that there should be limits
> on immigration because there are not enough jobs in America or that
> American beliefs and customs may be weakened by too much immigration.

7. What did Congress do related to immigration in 1875?

> **Suggested answer**: In 1875, Congress passed its first immigration law. It
> kept undesirables out, such as convicts. [paragraph 5]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase
that best completes the sentence.

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Depression more people left the United States than came in.

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When? **today**

(do) What? **come to the United States**

(from) Where? **Asia, South America, the Caribbean, and Mexico**

10. **Vocabulary Word**: discriminate: to choose in favor or against a person or
thing based on the basis of which group, class, or category they belong to.
Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.