

The Increase of Immigration

Immigration, the movement of people into a country, increased dramatically in the decades prior to the Civil War. Where did most of the immigrants come from? Where did they choose to settle?

During the 1830s, a steady flow of immigrants arrived in the United States at a rate of about 60,000 a year. However, during the 1840s, that number tripled and then quadrupled in the 1850s. The vast majority of these new arrivals came from Ireland and Germany.

Words to watch for:

influx exodus

blight famine

In the Northeast, American manufacturers welcomed this influx of immigrants as many of them were willing to work extremely long hours for very little pay. The largest group of immigrants during this era came from Ireland. Between 1846 and 1860, more than 1.5 million people left the Emerald Isle and arrived in the United States.

The exodus of people from Ireland was brought on by the Irish Potato Famine. Ireland experienced a terrible outbreak of potato blight during the 1840s. The disease destroyed nearly all of the potato crops during that decade. The residents of that tiny island, who were under British rule at the time, suffered immensely. Close to 2 million perished from starvation and hunger-related diseases. Millions of others left Ireland, with most heading west to make America their new home. As the majority of these immigrants could not afford land, they settled in large cities and took up jobs in factories. Others helped build the nation's railroads and canals as the transportation revolution took hold.

America's second-largest group of immigrants during this era came from Germany. Some headed to the New World in search of land and opportunity, while others fled their home after a failed democratic revolution in 1848.

Between 1848 and 1860, more than 1 million people left German lands and settled in the United States. While most Irish immigrants were too poor to purchase land in America, many Germans prospered as farmers. German immigrants tended to found their own communities, and extensive networks were established to assist Germans who arrived in the country. Some settled in eastern states, but the majority moved to the Midwest or settled in the western territories.



This steady flow of immigrants changed the character of America. Prior to the 1840s, the majority of immigrants were Protestants from Great Britain. The country had very few Catholics, and that population was largely concentrated around the cities of St. Augustine, New Orleans, and Baltimore. Nearly all of the Irish and about one-half of the German immigrants were Catholic.

Aside from their religion, these new Americans also brought with them their music, customs, holidays, and food. Many aspects of Irish and German culture filtered their way into the fabric of American society, further enriching the already diverse cultural landscape of America.

Guided Reading: *Fill in the blanks below to create complete sentences.*

1. During the 1840s, the number of immigrants into the US tripled and then _____ in the 1850s.

2. In the Northeast, American _____ welcomed this influx of immigrants.

3. Between 1846 and 1860, more than _____ people left the Emerald Isle and arrived in the United States.

4. Ireland experienced a terrible outbreak of potato _____ during the 1840s.

5. The Irish people, who were under _____ at the time, suffered immensely.

6. Irish immigrants also helped build the nation's _____ as the transportation revolution took hold.

7. America's second-largest group of immigrants during this era came from _____.

8. Between 1848 and 1860, more than _____ people left German lands and settled in the United States.

9. German immigrants tended to found their own _____.

10. Nearly all of the Irish and about one-half of the German immigrants were _____.

Multiple Choice: *Select the choice that completes the statement or answers the question.*

1. _____ Where did the vast majority of immigrants, around the mid-19th Century, come from?
 - a. Great Britain and Ireland
 - b. Great Britain and Germany
 - c. Ireland and Germany
 - d. Ireland and Italy

2. _____ What event helped to spark a mass migration of Irish to the United States?
 - a. the British conquest of Ireland
 - b. a failed revolution in 1848
 - c. the St. Patrick's Day Massacre
 - d. the Irish Potato Famine

3. _____ Which of the following statements is true of most Irish immigrants?
 - a. Most settled in large cities.
 - b. Most became farmers.
 - c. Most settled in the Midwest.
 - d. Most settled in the western territories.

4. _____ How many Germans came to America between 1848 and 1860?
 - a. around 500,000
 - b. just under 1 million
 - c. just over 1 million
 - d. more than 2 million

5. _____ Which of the following statements is NOT true of German immigrants?
 - a. German immigrants tended to found their own communities.
 - b. Extensive networks were established to assist Germans who arrived in the country.
 - c. Most were too poor to purchase their own land.
 - d. The majority moved to the Midwest or settled in the western territories.

Vocabulary: *Match each word with its correct definition. Consider how the word is used in the lesson. This might help you define each term. Use a dictionary to help if necessary.*

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| a. New World | d. blight |
| b. influx | e. famine |
| c. exodus | |

6. _____ extreme scarcity of food

7. _____ a name used for the majority of Earth's Western Hemisphere, specifically the Americas

8. _____ a plant disease, especially one caused by fungi such as mildews, rusts, and smuts

9. _____ a mass departure of people, especially emigrants

10. _____ an arrival or entry of large numbers of people

Summarize: *Answer the following questions in the space provided. Attempt to respond in a complete sentence for each question. Be sure to use correct capitalization and punctuation!*

1. Who tended to settle in American cities?

2. What event led to a large number of Germans immigrating to America?

3. When was the Irish Potato Famine?

4. Where did most German immigrants settle?

5. Why did German immigrants prosper more than the typical Irish immigrant?

6. How many Germans immigrated to the US between 1848 and 1860?

Student Response: *Write a paragraph addressing the questions raised below. A thorough response should consist of three to five complete sentences.*

7. In this lesson, you learned about the massive influx of Irish and German immigrants into the US during the mid-19th Century. In what ways were Irish and German immigrants similar? In what ways were they different?