

Document A

Source: Anzia Yeziarska, How I Found America, 1920. Yeziarska was a Jewish-American novelist born in Poland, who immigrated as a child with her parents to the United States where they lived in the immigrant neighborhood of the Lower East Side of Manhattan, New York. The story excerpted below, published in her first collection of short stories titled "Hungry Hearts," offers an inside into the lives of Jewish immigrants at the start of the twentieth century.

From lips to lips flowed the golden legend of the golden country:

"In America you can say what you feel, you can voice your thoughts in the open streets without fear..."

"In America is a home for everybody. The land is your land. Not like in Russia where you feel yourself a stranger in the village where you were born and raised..."

"Everybody is with everybody alike in America. Christians and Jews are brothers together."

"An end to the worry for the bread. An end to the fear of the bosses over you. Everybody can do what he wants with his life in America..."

"Plenty for all. Learning flows free like milk and honey"

(Part I)

Between buildings that loomed like mountains, we struggled with our bundles, spreading around us the smell of the steerage...

I looked about the narrow streets of squeezed-in stores and houses, ragged clothes, dirty bedding oozing out of the windows, ash-cans and garbage-cans cluttering the sidewalks. A vague sadness pressed down my heart, the first doubt of America.

"Where are the green fields and open spaces in America?" cried my heart. "Where is the golden country of my dreams?"

All about me was the hardness of brick and stone, the smells of the crowded poverty...

In America were rooms without sunlight, rooms to sleep in, to eat in, to cook in, but without sunshine...

And where was there a place in America for me to play? I looked out into the alley below and saw pale-faced children scrambling in the gutter. "Where is America?" cried my heart.

(Part II)

Document A: Anzia Yezierska ~ Guided Questions

1. Identify three aspects of the American dream described by Anzia Yezierska.

2. How does Anzia Yezierska’s description represent the challenges of life in an urban immigrant neighborhood?

3. How does the reality of Anzia Yezierska’s experiences compare to her initial dreams?

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Document B

Source: Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts made this statement in 1891. The occasion was a debate in the U.S. Senate over a proposed Literacy Act that would restrict future American immigration to those who could read and write. Congress would pass a bill sponsored by Lodge in 1896, with support from the Immigration Restriction League, requiring a literacy test for immigrants, though President Grover Cleveland later vetoed the bill in 1897.

“...the qualities of the American people...are moral far more than intellectual, and it is on the moral qualities of the English-speaking race that our history, our victories, and all our future rest. There is only one way in which you can lower those qualities or weaken those characteristics, and that is by breeding them out. If a lower race mixes with a higher in sufficient numbers, history teaches us that the lower race will prevail. The lower race will absorb the higher....

[We] are exposed to but a single danger, and that is by changing the quality of our race and citizenship through the wholesale infusion of races whose traditions and inheritances, whose thoughts and whose beliefs are wholly alien to ours....There lies the peril at the portals (gates) of our land; there is pressing in the tide of unrestricted immigration. The time has certainly come, if not to stop, at least to check, to sift, and to restrict those immigrants.”

Document B: Henry Cabot Lodge ~ Guided Questions

1. Who is Henry Cabot Lodge addressing in this statement and for what purpose?

2. According to Henry Cabot Lodge, what is the “danger” posed by immigration to the United States?

3. How does Henry Cabot Lodge’s perspective represent a Nativist point of view?

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Document C

*Source: Excerpt from Jane Addams' book, **Twenty Years at Hull-House, (1910)**. Hull House was a settlement house in Chicago open to recently arrived European immigrants. It offered social, educational, and artistic programs as part of a larger Americanization movement. This passage comes from a chapter called "Immigrants and Their Children."*

[A]n Italian girl who has had lessons in cooking at the public school will help her mother to connect the entire family with American food and household habits. That the mother has never baked bread in Italy—only mixed it in her own house and then taken it out to the village oven—makes all the more valuable her daughter's understanding of the complicated cooking stove. The same thing is true of the girl who learns to sew in the public school, and more than anything else, perhaps, of the girl who receives the first simple instruction in the care of little children—that skillful care which every tenement-house baby requires if he is to be pulled through his second summer....

Thus through civic instruction in the public schools, the Italian woman slowly became urbanized in the sense in which the word was used by her own Latin ancestors, and thus the habits of her entire family were modified. The public schools in the immigrant colonies deserve all the praise as Americanizing agencies which can be bestowed upon them, and there is little doubt that the fast-changing curriculum in the direction of the vocation-school experiments will react more directly upon such households.

Document C: Jane Addams ~ Guided Questions

1. What specific skills did the “Italian girl” learn from public institutions such as Jane Addams’s Hull House? How did these skills benefit her and her immigrant family?

2. What other skills and knowledge would new immigrants need in order to successfully assimilate into American society at the turn of the century?

3. How did the expansion of public schooling represent the larger ideas of the growing Americanization movement?

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Document D

Source: Excerpt from Jacob Riis' book How the Other Half Lives. While living in New York Riis experienced poverty and became a police reporter writing about the quality of life in the slums. This book exposed the appalling living conditions in urban city slums and tenements in the late 1800s. The term "muckraker" was used to describe and characterize journalists, like Riis, who attacked established institutions and leaders to expose social problems and corruption.

Bottle Alley is around the corner in Baxter Street; but it is a fair specimen of its kind, wherever found. Look into any of these houses, everywhere the same piles of rags, of malodorous bones and musty paper, all of which the sanitary police flatter themselves they have banished to the dumps and the warehouses. Here is a "flat" or "parlor" and two pitch-dark coops called bedrooms. Truly, the bed is all there is room for. The family tea-kettle is on the stove, doing duty for the time being as a wash-boiler. By night it will have returned to its proper use again, a practical illustration of how poverty in "the Bend" makes both ends meet. One, two, three beds are there, if the old boxes and heaps of foul straw can be called by that name; a broken stove with crazy pipe from which the smoke leaks at every joint, a table of rough boards propped up on boxes, piles of rubbish in the corner. The closeness and smell are appalling. How many people sleep here? The woman with the red bandanna shakes her head sullenly, but the bare-legged girl with the bright face counts on her fingers—five, six! "Six, sir!" Six grown people and five children. "Only five," she says with a smile, swathing the little one on her lap in its cruel bandage. There is another in the cradle—actually a cradle. And how much the rent? Nine and a half, and "please, sir! He won't put the paper on." "He" is the landlord. The "paper" hangs in musty shreds on the wall.

Document D: Jacob Riis ~ Guided Questions

1. Identify the “appalling living conditions” described by Riis in his book *How the Other Half Lives*.
2. What was the purpose of *How the Other Half Lives*? What change did Riis hope his book would bring about?
3. Does the reality of urbanization presented by Riis, match with the hopes of the American Dream? Explain.

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Document E

Source: Joseph Keppler, "Looking Backward," Puck Magazine. January 11, 1893. In the mid-1880s the number of immigrants to the United States from northern and western Europe declined sharply. At the same time, the number of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe greatly increased. The changing pattern of immigration concerned many Americans who believed the newcomers represented, in the language of the time, inferior "races" of Europe. The new immigrants were overwhelmingly non-Protestant Christians - either Roman Catholic or Orthodox - or Jewish and thus not Christian at all, which disturbed many Protestant Americans.



Document E: Looking Backward Political Cartoon ~ Guided Questions

1. Compare and contrast the five men with the one man arriving on the dock.

2. What do the shadows behind the men represent? What is the irony depicted?

3. Is the artist critical or supportive of Nativist anti-immigration laws?

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Document F

Source: Andrew Carnegie, "Wealth," North American Review, 1889. Carnegie was a wealthy Scottish-American industrialist who led the expansion of the American steel industry in the late 19th century and is often identified as one of the richest Americans ever. The article excerpted below was commonly known as the "Gospel of Wealth" and described the responsibility of philanthropy by the upper class of self-made rich.

"The problem of our age is the proper administration of wealth so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmony. The conditions of human life have been revolutionized within the past few hundred years. The contrast between the palace of the millionaire and the cottage of the laborer with us today measure the change which has come with civilization.

This change, however, is not to be deplored, but welcomed as highly beneficial. It is essential for the progress of the race that the houses of some should be homes for all that is highest and best in literature and the arts, rather than none should be so. Much better this great inequality than universal squalor.

The price which society pays for the law of competition, like the price it pays for cheap comforts and luxuries, is also great; but the advantages of this law are also greater still. For it is to this law that we owe our wonderful material development which brings improved conditions. While the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest in every department. We welcome, therefore, as conditions to which we must accommodate ourselves, great inequality of environment, the concentration of business, industrial commerce in the hands of the few; and the law of competition between these, as being not only beneficial, but essential for the future progress of the race."

Document F: Andrew Carnegie ~ Guided Questions

1. According to Carnegie, what are the universal benefits of the Industrial Era?

2. How does Carnegie’s point of view represent the ideas of Social Darwinism?

3. How does Carnegie counter the criticisms that industrial wealth and business practices were harmful to the general public?

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