

Reshaping American Society: How did Immigration and Urbanization Affect America in the mid 1800s?

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Grade Level: Middle

Duration of the History Lab: 5 days

Overview: The decades before the Civil War were ones of tremendous growth and change, especially in the northern states where industrialization was starting to take hold. Between 1815 and 1860, five million European immigrants came to the United States, with 4.2 million landing between 1840 and 1860. The Irish came in the greatest numbers, followed closely by the Germans. The strain of accommodating large, diverse populations spurred a nativist backlash in northern cities in the form of secret societies and new political parties, such as the Know-Nothings. Reform movements, which sought to address specific social problems, also arose in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. These forces helped to “push” the northern states in a different direction from the south, contributing to the regional tensions. In this History Lab, students will examine a variety of primary sources to determine the ways that immigration and urbanization affected and shaped American society in the turbulent antebellum period.

History Standards

National History Standards

Era 4: Expansion and Reform: 1801-1861

Standard 4: The sources and character of cultural and social reform movements in the antebellum period.

Historical Thinking Standards

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

- **Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage** by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.
- **Identify the central question(s)** the historical narrative addresses and the purpose, perspective, or point of view from which it has been constructed.

Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

- **Analyze cause-and-effect relationships** bearing in mind **multiple causation** including (a) **the importance of the individual** in history; (b) **the influence of ideas**, human interests, and beliefs; and (c) the role of chance, the accidental and the irrational.
- **Draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues** as well as large-scale or long-term developments that transcend regional and temporal boundaries.

Common Core State Standards: Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Grades 6-8

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Grades 6-8

Key Ideas and Details

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- 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.

Craft and Structure

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Text Types and Purposes

- Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.
- 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.

Maryland State Curriculum Standards for United States History

History Indicator:

- Analyze the influence of industrialization and technological developments on society in the United States before 1877
- Analyze patterns of immigration to the United States before 1877.

Purpose

In this History Lab, students will analyze the impact of immigration and urbanization in northern cities in the decades leading up to the Civil War. They will also examine the reactionary and reform movements that arose in response.

Students will:

- Determine the factors that contributed to increased immigration from Ireland and Germanic regions in the mid 1800s.
- Describe the impact of immigration, industrialization and urbanization in northern cities.
- Explain how immigration and urbanization led to a nativist backlash.
- Consider how reform movements sought to address social problems in the mid 1800s.

Topic Background

In the decades leading up to the Civil War, the United States witnessed tremendous growth, especially in the northeastern states where industrialization was taking hold. In the short span between 1845 and 1854, three million European immigrants arrived in the U.S. The number of immigrants was higher, proportionately, to the number of native-born Americans (about 20 million) than ever before in the young country's history. Most of the immigrants were from Ireland and the Germanic areas of Europe.

Among the reasons that Europeans immigrated to the United States were pressures from over-population and over-farming, religious oppression, and the promise of economic opportunity. During the 1840s, many Irish suffered because of the failure of potato crops, on which they had become too dependent. When the potato famine hit, almost two million people perished in Europe from hunger. No matter how daunting the journey, many destitute Irish opted for the chance at a new life in the United States. They flocked to the large, northern seacoast cities to try to earn a living. Since most Irish came with almost nothing, they could not afford to move west and purchase land to become farmers. Many poor Germans came to the United States due to crop failures and other hardships. Other Germans, including professionals, craftsmen, and the wealthy, immigrated because of violent upheavals from the wide-spread revolutions of 1848. Germany was not a unified country at the time, but was comprised of independent principalities, kingdoms, and states. The Germanic states had autocratic

governments and compulsory military service. German immigrants sought the freedoms and opportunities that were lacking in their home countries. These immigrants generally arrived with more material goods than the Irish and often moved west to farm or establish businesses.

With such large numbers of immigrants coming to the United States, hostility towards them grew from native-born citizens. Many saw immigration as a threat to perceived traditional American culture and values. Some of the opposition was a religious backlash by Protestant groups against newly-arrived Roman Catholic immigrants, many of whom were Irish or German. Others were upset because some of the newcomers became liberal democrats with the potential to change the political balance. Some feared that native-born Americans would lose jobs to immigrants who were willing to work for lower pay. Many also feared the rise of crime and poverty in northern cities. Nativist secret societies and political parties became popular in the 1850s. The most famous was the "Know-Nothings." Members of the Know-Nothings movement were anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant. They were able to organize into a political party and elect a number of officials, but had trouble passing legislation. Riots and uprisings often took place as a result of nativist actions.

With the influx of immigrants and the emergence of problems arising from urbanization in the industrializing cities of the north, reform movements gained momentum. The crusade against drunkenness, known as the temperance movement, became a model for other reform movements. The temperance movement, which had as its goal the perfection of mankind, was led primarily by religious people. Women as well as men spoke out against the evils of alcohol. Other reform movements were less controversial. The movement to create mandatory public education, led by the reformist Horace Mann, and the effort to modernize the treatment of the mentally ill, championed by author and teacher Dorothea Dix, were crusades to improve life for the lower classes. As women used their voices to speak out on temperance, abolition, and other social problems, many decided to advocate for their own rights. In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott organized a women's rights convention at Seneca Falls, New York. There they wrote a Declaration of Women's Rights asking for equal rights and voting rights for women in the United States. Many of the reformers believed that America could become an almost perfect society through reform measures.

Immigration, urbanization, and reactionary and reform movements pushed the northern states in a different direction than the south. Life was fundamentally different in the industrializing north. Wage labor, which brought about opportunities for many people, was complicated by the growth of a poor working class. Reform movements thrived in cities, where men and women sought to solve the problems brought about by urbanization. The southern way of life was still primarily rural and based on agriculture. Although poverty certainly existed in the south, the problem of overcrowded cities was not prevalent as in the northern states. In the years leading up to the Civil War, many southerners increasingly resented the interference of northern reformers and politicians, and the distinctions between the regions widened.

Paul S. Boyer and others, *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People, Vol. 1: To 1877* (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 1990).

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“The Rise of American Industry: Irish and German Immigration,” U.S. History.org, available from <http://www.ushistory.org/us/25f.asp>. Accessed 27 September 2013.

Vocabulary

- **Antebellum** - Belonging or relating to the time before the Civil War
- **Detrimental** - Harmful
- **Immigration** -Travel to a country of which one is not a native in order to settle there
- **Germanic** - Relating to Germany, or its language, people, or culture
- **Nativist/nativism** - a policy of protecting or favoring the traditions and interests of native inhabitants over those of immigrants
- **Push Factor** - Negative conditions that make someone want to leave his or her country of origin; factors that make people feel as though they are being “pushed” out.
- **Pull Factor** - Positive conditions which entice a person to go to another place, as if they are being “pulled” there
- **Reaction** - An emotional or intellectual response to something; a response to something that involves taking action; an act in opposition to someone or something
- **Reform** - To change something by correcting faults, removing inconsistencies and abuses, and imposing modern methods or values
- **Urbanization** -The act of taking on the characteristics of a city; related to the physical growth of an urban area

Conducting the History Lab

Overarching Question: How did immigration and urbanization affect American society in the mid 1800s?

Materials:

RS#01: Views of Baltimore, 1831 and 1850

RS#02: Coming to America - Worksheet

RS#03: Coming to America - Documents

RS#04: Daily Summary Sheet

RS#05: Population of New York City, 1790-1860

RS#06: Examining Life in Lowell & New York City - Documents

RS#07: Examining Life in Lowell & New York City - Worksheet

RS#08: Know-Nothing Movement

RS#09: Bible Riots

RS#10: Reform Movements - Worksheet

RS#11: Reform Documents - Documents

Sticky Notes

Note: Explain to students that they will read a number first-hand accounts and other documents that were written in the mid 1800s. Grammar and spelling from the nineteenth century does not conform to current standards and conventions.

Day One – Immigration

Focus Question: What was the impact of immigration on northern cities during the early and mid 1800s?

Introduce the overarching question of the History Lab: How did immigration, urbanization, and reactionary and reform movements affect American society in the mid 1800s? Tell students that for the next several days they will be examining how American society was changing in the early and mid 1800s, particularly in the northern states.

Distribute or project RS#01, “Views of Baltimore 1831 and 1850.” Have students describe what they see (activities, people) in the two images. Lead a discussion of the possible changes that occurred in Baltimore in the 20-year period. Make a list of students’ responses.

Remind students that the first image is a painting and the second a photograph. Could the painting have been idealized or crafted in a particular way? What about the photograph?

Ask: Based on this information, do you think these changes were beneficial or detrimental to the people of Baltimore? Explain.

Context: The artist William J. Bennett created the first image of Baltimore in 1831. Bennett, who was born in London, traveled throughout the United States, documenting the landscape through his paintings. He was well known for his beautiful scenes. The second view of the Baltimore harbor, from 1851, is a daguerreotype, an early type of photography. Henry H. Clark, who is thought to have been the first person to photograph the whole city of Baltimore, made the photograph.

Have students refer to the focus question and ask:

- Why people from other countries would migrate to America in the early and mid 1800s?
- What types of documents might reveal the motivations of people immigrating to this country?

Prepare students to identify the factors for immigration in the early 1800s by having them complete Part 1 of RS#02, “Coming to America - Worksheet.”

Distribute RS#03, “Coming to American Cities - Documents.” Have students analyze the documents and describe the “push” and “pull” factors of immigration in the early and mid 1800s.

Clarify expectations and processes for students by modeling the analysis of Source A: Excerpt from *Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America*, by Gottfried Duden, 1829.

Divide the class in half and have one half examine the Germanic immigrant experience and the other half examine the Irish immigrant documents. Note that not all sources were created by the immigrants themselves.

Have students share their responses to answer the following questions:

- How was the Irish immigrant experience different from the Germanic immigrant experience?
- Based upon the tone of the sources, what expectations do you think immigrants had about America and how might American society have viewed the newcomers?

Assess student understanding of causes for immigration by having them respond to the following prompt:

From these accounts, did immigrants come to America in the early and mid 1800s because of the “push” or the “pull” factors? Support your answer with specific examples.

Extend students' understanding of immigration by having them write a letter from the perspective of a new immigrant in the 1840s to a friend living in the home country. Using key vocabulary and details from the primary and secondary sources from the lesson activities, students should explain why their character immigrated, how the immigrant's life has changed, and how the new city might have been impacted by immigration.

Exit Ticket - Distribute RS#04, "Daily Summary Sheet." Students will complete the immigration section to assess their understanding of the topic and discussion.

Day 2 – Immigration and Urbanization

Focus Question: How was the development of northern cities affected by immigration, factory work, and increasing population in the mid 1800s?

As large numbers of European immigrants settled in urban areas, like Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, American cities were transformed by the influx of people with varied cultural and societal backgrounds.

Distribute or project RS#05, “Population of New York City: 1790-1860.”

Have students calculate the change in population between 1790 and 1860. Note the tremendous growth from the beginning to the end of the period.

Ask students to offer predictions about the impact of such dramatic population increases on New York City. Their responses may include that population increases would affect housing, jobs, wages, ethnic tensions, political issues, religious differences, overcrowding and sanitation.

Distribute sticky notes to students. Ask them to write as many characteristics as they can that define the word “city.” Create an affinity chart by having students post their sticky notes on the wall or whiteboard grouped by the similarity of the characteristics. Examine the results to determine the top five most common characteristics of cities.

Next, display the following definition:

Urbanization: The act of taking on the characteristics of a city

Have students identify the positive effects of immigration on cities. Their responses might include diversification, the introduction of new cultures and traditions, and new ways of doing things. Why do you think we study the impact of immigration on urbanization in the United States?

Students will more closely investigate northern cities in the first half of the 19th century, looking at early factory work and life in immigrant neighborhoods. Distribute RS#06, “Examining Life in Lowell & New York City - Documents” and RS #07, “Examining Life in Lowell & New York City - Worksheet.”

In groups, have students review the sources for evidence to complete the worksheet. When completed, have students debrief their findings. Ask:

- What was work like in cities at the time and how was it changing?
- In what ways was increased immigration beneficial and detrimental to northern cities?

Students will complete the "urbanization" section on RS#04, "Daily Summary Sheet."

Day 3 – Reactionary Movements

Focus Question: Why did nativist movements arise in reaction to immigration and urbanization in the mid 1800s?

Immigrants brought with them cultural, societal, and religious beliefs, which at times conflicted with prevailing American traditions.

Extend student understanding of nativism and the nativist movement in the 1800s by reading and completing RS#8, "The Know-Nothings." Facilitate a discussion of the conditions in the north that led to the growth of the nativist movement. Students may want to consider modern-day examples of anti-immigrant reactions.

Students will more closely examine the effects of nativism by examining a case study on the "Bible Riots," which took place in Philadelphia in the spring and summer of 1844.

Distribute RS#09, "Bible Riots." As a class, have students examine the illustrations in Source A and Source B and describe the dramatic scenes they depict. Have students read the context paragraph and then, as a class, read Source A, John Perry's account. As a class, list the chronology of the events.

Discuss the following questions with students, offering them a chance to compare the Know-Nothing Movement and the Bible Riots:

- What do the Know-Nothing Movement and the Bible Riots have in common?
- Who took part in the Know-Nothing Movement? Who took part in the Bible Riots?
- What does this tell you about how some people viewed immigrants?
- What type of action did the Know-Nothings take? How did people react during the Bible Riots?

Discuss how reactionary movements were the negative outcome of the pressures of urbanization and changes due to immigration. How could society have responded in a positive way to these pressures?

Students will complete the "reaction" section on RS#04, "Daily Summary Sheet."

Day 4 – Reform Movements

Focus Question: How successful were reform movements in solving social problems in the mid 1800s?

In response to the changes in American society, some men and women sought to address social problems and conditions, spurring the temperance, public education, woman's rights, and workers' rights movements.

To introduce students to the concept of reform, initiate a brief class discussion on school-based reform efforts, such as recycling, anti-bullying and community service.

Ask:

- What are the goals of the groups?
- How do the groups raise awareness of their issues and gain support for their activities?

Conduct a stations activity to examine four reform movements that were active in the mid 1800s: temperance, public education, woman's rights, and workers' rights.

Prepare four stations in the classroom, using the documents in RS#11, "Reform Movements – Documents." Distribute RS#10, "Reform Movements – Worksheet."

Divide students into four groups. Each group will circulate among the four stations. At each station, students will read the background (context) information on the worksheet and then examine the related documents. Students will then complete the related section on the worksheet. Debrief the activity.

Discuss:

- Do you think these reform movements were beneficial or detrimental to society, or both?
- What may have been some obstacles the reform movements would have faced at the time?

Assess students' understanding of reform in the mid 1800s by having them complete the appropriate section on the "Daily Summary Sheet" (RS#04).

Students will complete the "reform" section on RS#04, "Daily Summary Sheet."

Day 5 – Performance Assessment

Conduct a discussion of the History Lab using the Daily Summary Sheet for reference. Pose the overarching question: How did immigration and urbanization affect American Society in the mid 1800s? Refer to the focus questions to assist students in their responses.

Conclude the History Lab by assessing students' understanding using the "RAFT" strategy (role, audience, format, topic).

Have students develop a one-page written response to the following prompt:

You are a historian living in a northern city in 1851. You have been asked to document the changes that have occurred in your city over the last 20 years. Using what you have learned, write a one-page article for your local history museum. In your article, identify the changes that have taken place. Discuss and give examples of how your city has changed. Discuss whether these changes were beneficial or detrimental (or both) to city residents. Use evidence from the sources you have read to support your analysis and reflection.

Differentiate the process by varying the writing prompt and changing the role, audience, format, or topic. For example, the student could be an author/illustrator of a children's book that describes the benefits and challenges of living in a city in the mid 1800s. Alternatively, students can write from the perspective of:

- A reporter who is reporting on events and conditions in his or her city;
- An urban planner who is developing guidelines for the construction of new dwellings or factories;
- A reformer who is crafting a promotional brochure to raise funds to solve an identified social problem in his or her city.

Alternate Assessment Option - Have students review RS#05, "Population of New York City, 1790-1860." Ask students to write a one-page explanation about the dramatic changes in northern cities that accompanied the increase in population in the decades from 1820 to 1850. A complete answer will include why immigration increased, the impact of urban growth, and the response (reaction and reform movements) to that change.

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