

The United States, 1900-1929.

Text in **Bold** can be found in the glossary

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the United States underwent a large wave of immigration from Europe as well as the rest of the world. Americans hoped that these new immigrants would help to make America richer by providing a reliable workforce.

Just under 40 million immigrants have been estimated to have entered the USA between 1900 and 1929. This surge of people brought variety and prosperity to society but also brought problems.

Jewish Immigrants in New York (right)

Why immigrate to the USA?

The majority of immigrants who came to the USA between 1900 and 1929 came from countries in South-Eastern Europe such as Italy and Greece. People from Russia, Mexico, China and Japan also immigrated.

There were push factors which encouraged people to immigrate from their own countries as well as pull factors which made people want to come to the United States. Some examples are:

- Economic advantages- It was easy to own land, there were low taxes and there was employment for those who could work.
- Promises of religious tolerance- Russian **pogroms** caused many Jews from the Russian empire to flee for their lives.
- Escape from punishment- Political criminals and regular criminals came to the USA to escape their own countries and continue to follow their beliefs in the liberal USA.
- Wanderlust- Many people wanted a change and sought adventure in a new place.

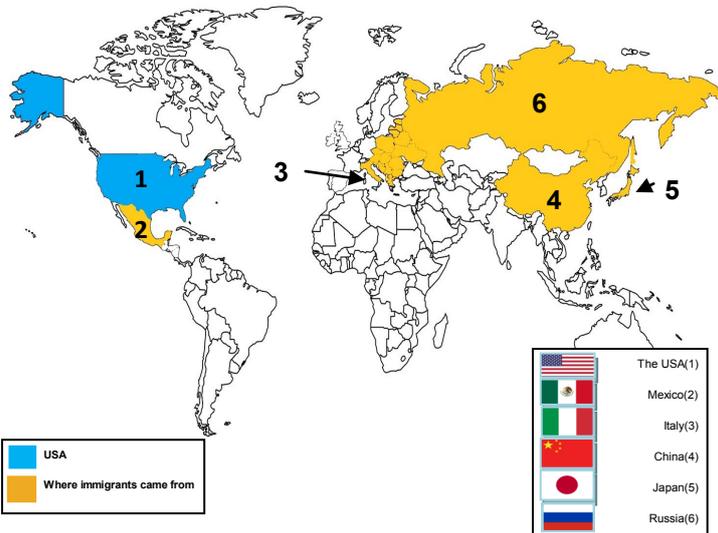


Controlling entry

Immigration to the USA increased and many American began to wonder if there should be checks in place to control who was allowed to enter the USA. There were social, political and economic reasons for their worries.

Political	Economic	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Americans worried that immigrants would <u>bring dangerous</u> and 'un-American' <u>extremist political beliefs</u> such as communism and anarchism to the USA. • During the First World War, people began to worry that immigrants <u>not patriotic</u> and could be <u>spies</u> for their native countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Americans saw immigrants as <u>stealing jobs</u> which were meant to be theirs. • Immigrants who were unable to work were seen as a <u>burden on the government and society</u>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrants were often associated with <u>spreading diseases</u> such as Tuberculosis and Influenza. • New <u>religions</u> and <u>languages</u> were introduced to the USA through immigration and some thought them to be 'un-American' and too different to their own culture. • Immigrants were poorer so they were often seen with being linked to crime, violence and alcohol.

Where most immigrants between 1900



Acts Passed

The US government passed laws to restrict immigration as the population was increasingly getting worried about the number of people entering the USA. These policies were **isolationist**.

- **1917, Literacy Test**- People wanting to enter the USA had to pass certain writing and reading tests in order to be allowed through immigration stations.
- **1918, Immigration Act**- Allowed the US government to deport immigrants which they thought to be communists, anarchists and or labour organisers.
- **1921, The Emergency Quota Act**- This act set the number of immigrants allowed to enter the USA to a maximum of 357,000 per year. This meant that only 3% of any foreign population already in the USA could immigrate after 1921.
- **1924, The National Origins Act**- This act was also nicknamed the 'Johnson Reed Act' and set the number of immigrants allowed into the USA to just 150,000 per year. The quota was brought down to 2% of any foreign population and focused on stopping people from Asia and Eastern Europe from entering the USA.

Ellis Island & Angel Island

There were various immigration stations across the USA but the two most famous ones were Ellis Island close to New York City and Angel Island in San Francisco.

Ellis Island was opened in 1892 and most immigrants from Europe travelled through here to get to the USA.

Angel Island is on the opposite side of the USA to Ellis Island and opened in 1910. Immigrants from Asia were the main groups to come through this station.

Immigrants on both stations would be met by immigration officers who would check their documents and if they were considered healthy enough to be allowed through the barriers to their new lives.

If an immigrant was found to be suffering with disease, they could be held in the immigration station for days or sent home on the next boat.



(above) Immigrants entering Ellis Island.

Primary Source

Calvin Coolidge was a **Republican** president of the United States between 1923 and 1929. This is his **State of the Union address** to Congress in 1923.

'American institutions rest solely on good citizenship. They were created by people who had a background of self-government. New arrivals should be limited to our capacity to absorb them into the ranks of good citizenship. America must be kept American. For this purpose, it is necessary to continue a policy of restricted immigration. It would be well to make such immigration of a selective nature with some inspection at the source and based either on a prior census or upon the record of naturalization. Either method would ensure the admission of those with the largest capacity and best intention of becoming citizens. I am convinced that our present economic and social conditions warrant a limitation of those to be admitted. We should find additional safety in a law requiring the immediate registration of all aliens. Those who do not want to be partakers of the American spirit ought not to settle in America.'

President Calvin Coolidge –State of the Union Address 1923- 6th December 1923.

- What does Coolidge's State of the Union speech say about his stance on immigration?
- What do you think Coolidge means when he talks about the 'American Spirit'?

Immigrant Story-

The Stollmayer Family

In 1912, eighteen-year-old Kathrine Stollmayer left Hungary to join her older brother who was living in Pennsylvania in the United States.

The ship she set sail on was called the Prinz Freidrich Wilhelm and it set off from Bremen in Germany. After twelve long days, she arrived at Ellis Island.

Kathrine settled into her new life in America and became a governess for a wealthy family until she married another Hungarian immigrant- John Schmidt.

In 1925, Katherine's parents arrived in Pennsylvania to join the rest of their family in their new life.



The Stollmayer Family in 1905



(left) A ship bound for Ellis Island.

Glossary

Pogrom— Organised violent persecution of ethnic or religious groups (particularly Jews).

Wanderlust—The desire to travel.

Communism— The belief that wealth should be shared equally. The government and community should own land, industry and the economy collectively.

Anarchism— The political belief that no government should exist.

Tuberculosis— Also known as TB. An infectious disease which attacks the lungs.

Influenza— Also known as Flu. A very infectious disease which had a serious outbreak in 1918.

Isolationist— or Isolationism, is a governmental policy in which a country wants no relationship with other countries.

Republican— One of the two main political parties in the USA.

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