

Lesson 26: The Great Wave of Immigration

What was life like for immigrants in the early 1900s?

Lesson 26 - Section 6: Closing the Door on Immigration

- The United States has always been a nation of immigrants.
- Yet time and again nativism, or anti-immigrant feelings, has sparked actions and policies directed against newer arrivals.
- While nativism is sometimes rooted in economic competition, other times it stems from ethnic, religious, and other differences.



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- The surge in immigration that began in the 1880s fueled another rise in nativism.
- Some native-born Americans blamed immigrants for everything from slums and crime to hard times and competition for jobs, which prompted many labor leaders to discriminate against nonwhites.



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- Politicians responded to the growing prejudice against immigrants. As you have read, in 1882 Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, banning further immigration by Chinese laborers.
- In 1907, Japanese immigrants were forbidden entry to the United States.
- In 1917, Congress required immigrants to prove they could read and write in at least one language before they were allowed to enter the United States.



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- To further limit immigration, Congress established a quota system in 1921 and refined it in 1924.
- Under this system, by 1927 only 150,000 immigrants were allowed to enter the United States annually, and people from East Asia were completely excluded.



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- In addition, quotas limited immigration from any one country to 2 percent of the number of people from that country who lived in the United States in 1890.
- Most eastern and southern Europeans had arrived after that year. As a result, most of the quota spaces were reserved for immigrants from England, Ireland, and Germany.



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- The new laws did not restrict Mexican immigration, but Mexicans now needed passports and visas to enter the United States.
- Visas allow people from other nations to enter and stay in the United States for a limited period. For the first time, the nation was closing its doors.

