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# TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES

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## Information Literacy and Historical Primary Sources



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# Overview

Together we will:

- Reflect on own frameworks.
- Evaluate where information is coming from.
- Identify arguments, claims, and evidence.
- Reflect on applications to participants' teaching settings.

# Emigrants [i.e. immigrants] landing at Ellis Island



**Created / Published**

United States : Thomas A. Edison, Inc., 1903.







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# Pause for Individual Reflection

What are your thoughts on the topic of immigration?

- What do I believe or know about this topic?
- How have I been personally affected by it?
- **Where do my ideas come from?**

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# Think About Your Students

- Why is it important to help students identify their thoughts on a topic?
- And where their ideas come from?

# Immigration Figures for 1903

PUBLICATIONS OF THE IMMIGRATION RESTRICTION LEAGUE No. 38.

## Immigration Figures for 1903.

(From Statistics furnished by the Commissioner-General of Immigration.)

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS RECEIVED DEC-1 1903

Comparison of the Fiscal Years ending June 30, 1902 and 1903.

	1902.	1903.
Total immigration . . . . .	648,743	857,046
Percentage of increase over 1902 . . . . .		32
Percentage of increase over 1901 . . . . .	33	76
Percentage of increase over 1899 . . . . .	108	175
Percentage of increase over 1898 . . . . .	183	274
Number debarred from entrance and returned within one year after landing . . . . .	5,429	9,316
Per cent. debarred and returned . . . . .	0.8	1.1
Number of illiterates over 14 years of age. [See Note 1.] . . . . .	165,105	189,008
Per cent. of illiterate in total immigration over 14 years of age . . . . .	28.7	25.0
Immigration from countries of Northern and Western Europe. [See Note 2.] . . . . .	138,700	203,689
Per cent. of total immigration . . . . .	21.4	23.8
Immigration from countries of Southern and Eastern Europe. [See Note 2.] . . . . .	480,331	610,813
Per cent. of total immigration . . . . .	74.0	71.3
Immigration from Asia . . . . .	22,271	29,966
Per cent. of total immigration . . . . .	3.4	3.5
Average money brought, in dollars . . . . .	16	19
Per cent. of immigrants who have been in the United States before . . . . .	9.5	8.9
Per cent. of total immigration having no occupation, including women and children . . . . .	23.6	23.3
Per cent. of total immigration who were farm-laborers, laborers, or servants . . . . .	60.6	57.3
Per cent. of total immigration destined for the four States of Ill., Mass., N. Y., and Pa. . . . .	67.8	65.4

NOTE 1.— Although the percentage of illiteracy shows an improvement this year over last, it should be remembered that these figures are based upon the manifests, which in turn are made up from the statements of the immigrants. One test recently made at New York showed that 175

10

# What do you know about the early 20<sup>th</sup> century?

*legat. div.*

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# Where can you learn more about the early 20<sup>th</sup> century?

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## Rise of Industrial America, 1876-1900

[home](#)

### Overview



[International Stock Food Factory](#), between 1900 and 1910  
[Detroit Publishing Company](#)

In the decades following the Civil War, the United States emerged as an industrial giant. Old industries expanded and many new ones, including petroleum refining, steel manufacturing, and electrical power, emerged. Railroads expanded significantly, bringing even remote parts of the country into a national market economy.

Industrial growth transformed American society. It produced a new class of wealthy industrialists and a prosperous middle class. It also produced a vastly expanded blue collar working class. The labor force that made

industrialization possible was made up of millions of newly arrived immigrants and even larger numbers of migrants from rural areas. American society became more diverse than ever before.

Not everyone shared in the economic prosperity of this period. Many workers were typically unemployed at least part of the year, and their wages were relatively low when they did work. This situation led many workers to support and join labor unions. Meanwhile, farmers also faced hard times as technology and increasing production led to more competition and falling prices for farm

### Topics

- [The American West, 1865-1900](#)
- [Chinese Immigration to the United States, 1851-1900](#)
- [Immigration to the United States, 1851-1900](#)
- [City Life in the Late 19th Century](#)
- [Rural Life in the Late 19th Century](#)
- [Railroads in the Late 19th Century](#)
- [Work in the Late 19th Century](#)

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## Where can you learn more about the early 20<sup>th</sup> century?

“Industrial growth transformed American society...The labor force that made industrialization possible was made up of millions of newly arrived immigrants and even larger numbers of migrants from rural areas...Not everyone shared in the economic prosperity of this period. Many workers were typically unemployed at least part of the year, and their wages were relatively low when they did work.”

*Rise of Industrial America: 1876-1900*

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*immigrants listed as able to read and write were, in fact, illiterate. The recent agitation for an educational test for immigrants has undoubtedly made the latter more disposed to assert their ability to read and write.*

*NOTE 2.—“Northern and Western Europe” includes the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Scandinavia, Belgium, Netherlands, and Switzerland.*

*“Southern and Eastern Europe” includes Austria-Hungary, Italy, Poland, Russia, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, and the Balkan States.*

**GENERAL REMARKS.**—Immigration has reached the high-water mark during the past year, exceeding that of the largest previous year (1882) by nearly 70,000. It is gratifying to note an increase of over one-third in the proportion of those debarred and returned, and to testify to the great improvement in the efficiency of the service since the present Commissioner-General took office. Attempts are also being made to secure an adequate inspection on the frontiers of Canada and Mexico, and steps are being now taken to ascertain definitely the aliens in our penal and charitable institutions.

On the other hand, while there has been some increase in the immigration from Northern and Western Europe, the great proportion of immigration has come as usual from the less desirable races of Southern and Eastern Europe, and there has been a considerable influx of illiterate Japanese.

Hon. William Williams, Commissioner at New York, says in his report: “Without the proper execution of [the present laws] it is safe to say that thousands of additional aliens would have come here last year. But these laws do not reach a large body of immigrants who, while not of this class, are yet generally undesirable, because unintelligent, of low vitality, of poor physique, able to perform only the cheapest kind of manual labor, desirous of locating almost exclusively in the cities, by their competition tending to reduce the standard of living of the American wageworker, and unfitted mentally or morally for good citizenship. It would be quite impossible to accurately state what proportion of last year's immigration should be classed as ‘undesirable.’ I believe that at least 200,000 (and probably more) aliens came here who, although they may be able to earn a living, yet are not wanted, will be of no benefit to the country, and will, on the contrary, be a detriment, because their presence will tend to lower our standards; and if these 200,000 persons could have been induced to stay at home, nobody, not even those clamoring for more labor, would have missed them. Their coming has been of benefit chiefly, if not only, to the transportation companies which brought them here.”

The largest elements in recent immigration were:

	1890.	1900.	1901.	1902.	1903.
Southern Italian . . . . .	65,639	84,346	115,704	152,915	196,117
Polish . . . . .	28,466	46,938	43,617	69,620	82,343
Scandinavian . . . . .	23,249	32,952	40,277	55,780	79,347
Hebrew . . . . .	37,415	60,764	58,098	57,688	76,203
German . . . . .	26,632	29,682	34,742	51,686	71,782
Irish . . . . .	32,345	35,607	30,404	29,001	35,366
Slovak . . . . .	15,838	29,243	29,343	36,934	34,427
Croatian and Slovenian . . . . .	8,632	17,184	17,928	30,233	32,907

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“by their competition tending to reduce the standard of living of the American wageworker, and unfitted mentally or morally for good citizenship.” (p. 2)

## What claims are being made?

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## ILLITERACY.

Number of persons in each hundred immigrants over fourteen years of age who cannot write or cannot read and write their own language, from those races (*not nations*) which contributed upwards of 2,000 immigrants to the United States during any of the past four fiscal years:

	1900.	1901.	1902.	1903.
<b>WESTERN EUROPE.</b>				
Scandinavian . . . . .	0.9	0.8	0.5	0.6
Scotch . . . . .	—	1.2	1.2	1.2
Bohemian and Moravian . . . . .	3.0	1.5	1.6	1.6
English . . . . .	0.2	1.8	1.9	1.6
Irish . . . . .	3.3	3.2	3.9	3.8
Finnish . . . . .	2.7	2.2	1.4	2.2
French . . . . .	3.9	3.9	4.8	3.8
German . . . . .	5.8	4.1	5.4	4.6
Dutch and Flemish . . . . .	9.6	7.8	7.6	6.9
Italian (North) . . . . .	11.2	15.7	14.4	12.7
<b>Average of above . . . . .</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>3.9</b>
<b>EASTERN EUROPE (WITH SPAIN AND PORTUGAL).</b>				
Spanish . . . . .	—	—	—	8.9
Magyar . . . . .	16.8	7.5	13.3	10.5
Roumanian . . . . .	—	—	28.3	21.5
Slovak . . . . .	27.9	30.7	25.9	21.6
Greek . . . . .	17.1	25.9	30.0	27.7
Russian . . . . .	—	—	—	31.9
Polish . . . . .	31.2	37.5	38.4	32.1
Croatian and Slovenian . . . . .	37.4	39.7	42.2	35.2
Bulgarian, Servian, Montenegrin . . . . .	—	—	—	44.7
Lithuanian . . . . .	31.7	49.8	54.1	46.6
Ruthenian . . . . .	49.0	53.2	50.0	49.4
Italian (South) . . . . .	54.6	59.1	56.4	51.4
Portuguese . . . . .	59.9	63.8	71.6	73.2
<b>Average of above . . . . .</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>46.0</b>	<b>44.3</b>	<b>39.7</b>
<b>OTHER RACES.</b>				
Cuban . . . . .	6.8	—	8.0	4.2
Chinese . . . . .	—	6.9	—	12.9
Hebrew . . . . .	22.9	23.6	28.6	26.5
Japanese . . . . .	8.9	6.7	1.2	27.0
African (black) . . . . .	—	—	—	32.5
Syrian . . . . .	55.9	56.1	51.0	53.8

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# Why might the authors include these statistics?

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Ruthenian . . . . .	49.0	53.2	50.0	49.4
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African (black) . . . . .	—	—	—	32.5
Syrian . . . . .	55.9	56.1	51.0	53.8

For publications and membership in the Immigration Restriction League address Prescott F. Hall, Secretary, Fiske Building, Boston. The dues for membership are as follows: For *annual* membership, one dollar, payable in advance upon admission and upon January 1st of each year; for *life* membership, ten dollars, payable upon admission, life members being exempt from annual dues.

*The League is a strictly non-partisan and non-sectarian organization, with members from all parts of the United States. It advocates a stricter regulation of immigration, but not the exclusion of any immigrants whose character and standards fit them to become citizens.*

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# How does learning about the source affect your reading of the document?

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# Focus Questions for Evaluating Information

- Who is behind the information? (source)
- What was happening at the time? (contextualization)
- What claims are being made? What evidence and arguments are made to support those claims? (close reading)
- What do other sources say? (corroborate)

# Read and evaluate

**Lewiston evening teller. [Idaho], Dec. 31, 1903**

**The Alien Bugbear**  
(New York Sun.)  
' It is very true, as Mr. Andrew Carnegie said on Sunday, in discussing the immigration question, that it is the language a man speaks rather than the country from which he comes that determines his race. Whatever may be the tongue of the immigrant, he becomes an American as soon as he learns to speak our language.

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Nor has the illiteracy which the advocates of the restriction of immigration would make a ground for exclusion proved a serious disqualification for naturalization and citizenship. A very great part of the Irish immigrants who came in the period when the flood of Irish immigration was at its height were poor and they were illiterate; yet now the percentage of illiteracy among the Irish race in this country is insignificant.

The arguments for the restriction of immigration now used are not at all novel or peculiar to any present condition. All of them were put forward

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## Pause to think

Revisit your earlier reflection.

*How might your previously stated views on immigration have affected your reading of these documents?*

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# Next steps in gathering information?

Searching for additional information from the Library's collections might:

- Corroborate facts
- Present different perspectives
- Identify larger contexts or related issues
- What more?

# How can I learn more?

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## Immigration: Challenges for New Americans



### Teacher's Guide

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[Immigration: Challenges for New Americans Teacher's Guide](#) (PDF, 2.76 MB)

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[Goodbye to Old Ireland!](#)

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[Steerage Passengers Taking Life Easy on an Ocean Liner America](#)

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[View of Ellis Island, N.Y.](#)

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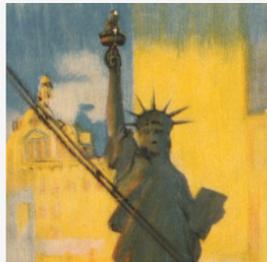
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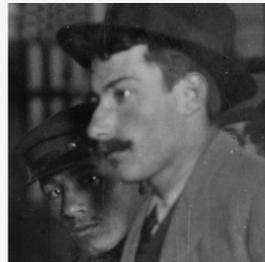
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**Overview - Immigration - Themed Resources**

Trace the immigrant experience and study contributions by immigrant Americans through historic film clips; images of Ellis Island, Angel Island and immigrant groups; presentations, letters and manuscripts.



WEB PAGE  
**Immigrant Arrivals: A Guide To Published Sources: Bibliographies & Guides - Local History & Genealogy Reading ...**

Bibliography of Library of Congress materials related to immigrant arrivals in the United States



LEGISLATION  
**Congress.gov**

U.S. Congress legislation, Congressional Record debates, Members of Congress, legislative process educational resources presented by the Library of Congress



BOOK

BOOK/PRINTED MATERIAL  
**Immigration**

"Presidential candidate Donald Trump's recent proposals to devote large amounts of federal spending into deporting all undocumented immigrants and to build a wall between the United States and Mexico are only two...

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# Reflection

How are each of the skills we practiced important for achieving information literacy?

- Reflecting on own frameworks.
- Evaluating information sources.
- Identify arguments, claims, and evidence.
- Researching additional information.

How might you help your students develop information literacy skills?