Immigration

Objective: To understand the hardships of immigrants in the United States.
Europeans Flood Into the United States

- By the 1890s, more than half of all immigrants in the United States were eastern and southern Europeans.
- Poor rural farmers came because the US had plenty of jobs and few immigration restrictions.
- Many moved to avoid military service.
- Others, especially Jews living in Poland and Russia fled to avoid religious persecution.
Atlantic Voyage and Ellis Island

- Most immigrants booked passage in **steerage**, the most basic and cheapest accommodations on a steamship.
- After 14 days, most immigrants arrived at **Ellis Island**, a tiny island in New York Harbor.
- At Ellis Island, immigrants filed past doctors for an initial inspection.
- Newcomers who failed the inspection might be separated from their families and returned to Europe.
 By the 1890s, immigrants made up significant percentages of some of the country’s largest cities, including New York, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Detroit.

 In the cities, immigrants lived in neighborhoods that were often separated by ethnic groups, such as “Little Italy” and “Lower East Side” in New York City.

 As many as one in three immigrants returned to Europe.
Asian Immigration to America

- Chinese immigrants began coming to America because China was suffering from severe unemployment, poverty, and famine.
- The discovery of gold in California along with the Taiping Rebellion also caused thousands of Chinese to leave for the United States.
- Chinese immigrants mainly settled in western cities, where they often worked as laborers or servants or in skilled trades.
- In 1910, California opened a barracks on Angel Island to accommodate Asian immigrants.
The Resurgence of Nativism

- The wave of immigration led to increased feelings of **nativism** (an extreme dislike for foreigners by native born people and a desire to limit immigration).

- Some Nativists feared that the influx of Catholics from Ireland and southern and eastern Europe would affect the mostly Protestant United States, giving the Catholic Church too much power in the government.

- Labor unions opposed immigration because they believed that immigrants would work for low wages.
Prejudice Against Newcomers

- Henry Bowers founded the American Protective Association, which despised Catholics and foreigners and committed his group to stopping immigration.
- Denis Kearney organized the Workingman’s Party of California to stop Chinese immigration.
- In 1882, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which barred Chinese immigration for 10 years and prevented the Chinese already in the country from becoming citizens.
- The Chinese protested the law but Congress renewed it in 1892 and 1902. It was not repealed until 1943.