Turn of the Century Immigration

What was it like to be an immigrant to the US during the early 1900s?
Why Europeans Immigrated to the US

- **New European immigrants** = Italians, Greeks, Hungarians, Poles, Russians

- **Push Factors** (reasons for leaving country)
  - Population Growth
  - Hunger
  - Lack of land
  - Religious persecution

- **Pull Factors** (reasons for coming to US)
  - Free, democratic society
  - Land and natural resources
  - Jobs for unskilled workers
  - Letters from other immigrants already in US
Ellis Island

- Rich immigrants → easily entered US through NY

- Poorer immigrants → had to go through Ellis Island
  - Medical Exam: poor health could lead to deportation
  - Legal Interview: demographic questions
  - However, only about 2% of all immigrants were deported

- Most jobs were in cities → city pop. exploded

- Most immigrants lived in cheapest parts of cities that were run down

- Most immigrants lived with others from their home countries
  - Led to segregated neighborhoods
Responses to New European Immigrants

- Some offered help
  - Settlement houses provided aid for struggling immigrants
  - Political bosses provided jobs in exchanges for votes

- Some wanted assimilation
  - Wanted immigrants to adopt American values

- Some rejected them
  - **Nativism:** favor native-born Americans over immigrants
  - Blamed immigrants for lack of jobs, lowering wages
  - **1920s,** Congress started passing quota laws (limiting # of immigrants from each country)
Immigration from Asia

- **Chinese immigrants**
  - Built railroads, searched for gold in CA, farm labor in Hawaii and CA

- **Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)**
  - Economic downturn caused Americans to blame Chinese workers for low wages
  - Racism was prevalent
  - 1st time US restricted immigration solely on race
  - Caused shortage of farm labor → more immigrants from Japan, Korea, Philippines

- **Angel Island**
  - “Ellis Island of the West”
Immigration from Mexico & Canada

- Restrictions on Asian immigration caused farm labor shortage in West

- **Mexican immigration**
  - Came to work farmland, escape poverty, war (Mexican Rev. 1910)
  - Experienced racism from white Americans

- **French-Canadian immigration**
  - Came to work in textile factories in New England states
  - Were accused of not wanting to Americanize