

AMERICAN PEOPLE

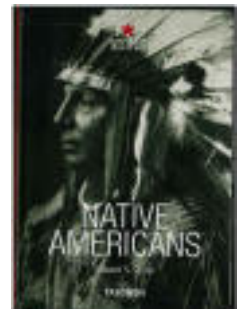
Immigration patterns and ethnic composition

The United States has welcomed more immigrants than any other country - more than 50 million in all - and still admits almost 700,000 persons a year. "This is the secret of America: a nation of people with the fresh memory of old traditions who dare to explore new frontiers...."

- President John F. Kennedy

Native Americans

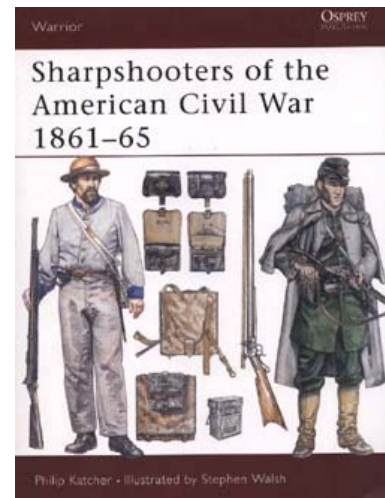
- The first American immigrants, beginning more than 20,000 years ago, were intercontinental wanderers: hunters and their families following animal herds from Asia to America, across a land bridge where the Bering Strait is today.
- When Christopher Columbus discovered the New World in 1492, about 1.5 million Native Americans lived in what is now the continental United States, although estimates of the number vary greatly. Mistaking the place where he landed - San Salvador in the Bahamas - for the Indies, Columbus called the Native Americans "Indians."
- Native Americans suffered greatly from the influx of Europeans. The transfer of land from Indian to European - and later American - hands was accomplished through treaties, wars, and coercion, with Indians constantly giving way as the newcomers moved west.
- The territorial wars, along with Old World diseases to which Indians had no built-up immunity, sent their population plummeting, to a low of 350,000 in 1920. Some tribes disappeared altogether. Other tribes lost their languages and most of their culture. Nonetheless, Native Americans have proved to be resilient. Today they number about two million (0.8 percent of the total U.S. population), and only about one-third of Native Americans still live on reservations.
- Countless American place-names derive from Indian words, including the states of Massachusetts, Ohio, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, and Idaho. Indians taught Europeans how to cultivate crops that are now staples throughout the world: corn, tomatoes, potatoes, and tobacco. Canoes, snowshoes, and moccasins are among the Indians' many inventions.



Immigration Waves

- The English were the dominant ethnic group among early settlers of what became the United States, and English became the prevalent American language.

- People of other nationalities were not long in following. The settlers who came not only from Great Britain, but also from other European countries, including Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, Germany, and Sweden. Nonetheless, in 1780 three out of every four Americans were of English or Irish descent.
- Between 1840 and 1860, the United States received its first great wave of immigrants: In Europe as a whole, famine, poor harvests, rising populations and political unrest caused an estimated 5 million people to leave their homelands each year.
- In Ireland, a blight attacked the potato crop, and upwards of 750,000 people starved to death. Many of the survivors emigrated. In one year alone, 1847, the number of Irish immigrants to the United States reached 118,120. Today there are about 39 million Americans of Irish descent.
- The failure of the German Confederation's Revolution of 1848-49 led many of its people to emigrate. By 1865, about one in five Union soldiers was a wartime immigrant. Today, 22 percent of Americans have German ancestry.



- Jews came to the United States in large numbers beginning about 1880, a decade in which they suffered fierce pogroms in Eastern Europe. Over the next 45 years, 2 million Jews moved to the United States; the Jewish-American population is now more than 5 million.
- During the late 19th century, so many people were entering the United States that the government operated a special port of entry on Ellis Island in the harbor of New York City.
- Between 1892, when it opened, and 1954, when it closed, Ellis Island was the doorway to America for 12 million people. It is now preserved as part of Statue of Liberty National Monument.
- The Statue of Liberty, which was a gift from France to the people of America in 1886, stands on an island in New York harbor, near Ellis Island. The statue became many immigrants' first sight of their homeland-to-be.
- These inspiring words by the poet Emma Lazarus are etched on a plaque at Liberty's base:

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me;
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*



- The Statue of Liberty, one of the most famous landmarks in the United States. It is regarded as a symbol of the United States and an expression of freedom and opportunity. The statue depicts liberty as a woman draped in flowing robes and carrying a lighted torch. She wears a crown of seven spikes that represent the seven seas and seven continents. In her left arm, she cradles a tablet bearing the date of the American Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.

The Blacks

- Among the flood of immigrants to North America, one group came unwillingly. These were Africans, 500,000 of whom were brought over as slaves between 1619 and 1808. The

practice of owning slaves and their descendants continued, however, particularly in the agrarian South, where many laborers were needed to work on the fields.

- The process of ending slavery began in April 1861 with the outbreak of the American Civil War between the free states of the North and the slave states of the South, 11 of which had left the Union.
- On January 1, 1863, midway through the war, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which abolished slavery in those states that had seceded. Slavery was abolished throughout the United States with the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the country's Constitution in 1865.
- Even after the end of slavery, however, American blacks were hampered by segregation and inferior education. Many urban blacks were unable to find work; by law and custom they had to live apart from whites, in run-down neighborhoods called ghettos.
- In the late 1950s and early 1960s, African Americans, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., used boycotts, marches, and other forms of nonviolent protest to demand equal treatment under the law and an end to racial prejudice.
- On August 28, 1963, more than 200,000 people of all races gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., to hear King's speech "I have a dream". Not long afterwards the U.S. Congress passed laws prohibiting discrimination in voting, education, employment, housing, and public accommodations.
- Today, African Americans constitute 12.7 percent of the total U.S. population. In recent decades blacks have made great strides, and the black middle class has grown substantially. In 1996, 44 percent of employed blacks held "white-collar" jobs - managerial, professional, and administrative positions rather than service jobs or those requiring manual labor. That same year 23 percent of blacks between ages 18 and 24 were enrolled in college, compared to 15 percent in 1983.
- In any case, perhaps the greatest change in the past few decades has been in the attitudes of America's white citizens. More than a generation has come of age since King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Younger Americans in particular exhibit a new respect for all races, and there is an increasing acceptance of blacks by whites in all walks of life and social situations.

Illegal Immigrants

- The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service estimates that some 5 million people are living in the United States without permission, and the number is growing by about 275,000 a year.
- Native-born Americans and legal immigrants worry about the problem of illegal immigration. Many believe that illegal immigrants (also called "illegal aliens") take jobs from citizens, especially from young people and members of minority groups. Moreover, illegal aliens can place a heavy burden on tax-supported social services.
- In 1986 Congress revised immigration law to deal with illegal aliens. Many of those who had been in the country since 1982 became eligible to apply for legal residency that would eventually permit them to stay in the country permanently.
- In 1990, nearly 900,000 people took advantage of this law to obtain legal status. The law also provided strong measures to combat further illegal immigration and imposed penalties on businesses that knowingly employ illegal aliens.

Shifts in Immigration Laws

YEAR	THE ACT OF LAW	THE EFFECT OF THE LAW
1882	The Chinese Exclusion Act	Prohibited the Chinese from entering the country.
1907	T. Roosevelt's "Gentlemen's Agreement"	Stopped Japanese laborers from coming to the United states.
1917	The Literacy Test Act	Kept out illiterate immigrants (people unable to read or write in any language).
1924	An Immigration Act	Set up a quota system (yearly limits on the number of immigrants from each country). The law allowed higher quotas for some nations than for others
	The national Origins Act	Excluded all Japanese, Chinese, and other Asians form the United States.
1948	The Displaced Persons Act	Allowed 500,000 war victims to immigrate to the United States
	The Fulbright Act	Brought in scholars from around the world. Many of them stayed in this country.
1952	The McCarran-Walter Act	Opened the United States to Asian immigration. But the quota system still discriminated against non-Europeans
1953	The Refugee Relief Act	Admitted over 200,000 refugees outside the quota system.
1965	An Immigration Act	Set area quotas instead of national ones: 120,000 immigrants per year from Western hemisphere (Canada and Central and South America) and 170,000 per year from the rest of the world.
1986	The Immigration Reform Control Act	Gave amnesty to many illegal aliens and allowed them to legalize their status. The law puts penalties on employers that hire employees without work authorization.

Language and Nationality

- It is not uncommon to walk down the streets of an American city today and hear Spanish spoken. In 1950 fewer than 4 million U.S. residents were from Spanish-speaking countries. Today that number is about 35 million. About 50 percent of Hispanics in the United States have origins in Mexico. The other 50 percent come from a variety of countries, including El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia. Thirty-two percent of the Hispanics in the United States live in California. Several other states have large Hispanic populations, including Texas, New York, Illinois, and Florida, where hundreds of thousands of Cubans fleeing the Castro regime have settled. There are so many Cuban Americans in Miami that the *Miami Herald*, the city's largest newspaper, publishes separate editions in English and Spanish.

- The widespread use of Spanish in American cities has generated a public debate over language. Some English speakers point to Canada, where the existence of two languages (English and French) has been accompanied by a secessionist movement. To head off such a development in the United States, some citizens are calling for a law declaring English the official American language.
- Others consider such a law unnecessary and likely to cause harm. They point to differences between America and Canada (in Canada, for example, most speakers of French live in one locale, the province of Quebec, whereas speakers of Spanish are dispersed throughout much of the United States) and cite Switzerland as a place where the existence of multiple languages does not undermine national unity. Recognition of English as the official language, they argue, would stigmatize speakers of other languages and make it difficult for them to live their daily lives.

The Legacy

- The steady stream of people coming to America's shores has had a profound effect on the American character. It takes courage and flexibility to leave your homeland and come to a new country. The American people have been noted for their willingness to take risks and try new things, for their independence and optimism.
- If Americans whose families have been here longer tend to take their material comfort and political freedoms for granted, immigrants are at hand to remind them how important those privileges are.
- Immigrants also enrich American communities by bringing aspects of their native cultures with them. Many black Americans now celebrate both Christmas and Kwanzaa, a festival drawn from African rituals. Hispanic Americans celebrate their traditions with street fairs and other festivities. Ethnic restaurants abound in many American cities.
- President John F. Kennedy, himself the grandson of Irish immigrants, summed up this blend of the old and the new when he called America "a society of immigrants, each of whom had begun life anew, on an equal footing. This is the secret of America: a nation of people with the fresh memory of old traditions who dare to explore new frontiers...."

Questions and Discussions

1. Cloze test (one word is needed for each blank)

The story of the American people is a story of and diversity. The United States has more immigrants than any other country - more than 50 million in all - and still admits almost 700,000 persons a year. In the past many American writers emphasized the idea of the pot, an image that suggested newcomers would discard their old and adopt American ways. Typically, for example, the children of immigrants learned but not their parents' first language. Recently, however, Americans have placed greater value on, ethnic groups have renewed and celebrated their, and the children of immigrants often grow up being, that is, they can speak two languages at the same time.

2. Explain what Kennedy said, "*This is the secret of America: a nation of people with the fresh memory of old traditions who dare to explore new frontiers...*"

3. Why is it said that the U.S. is a nation of diversity? Briefly outline the immigration patterns and ethnic composition of this country.
4. How much do you understand about the term "the Golden Door" in this lesson? Do you think that the U.S. has always been encouraging the immigration from everywhere all over the world?
5. There are now a large number of the Vietnamese in the U.S. When and why have these Vietnamese people settled in this country? Do you think that they are successful in the new land?