

Higher History: European and World

USA, 1918 – 1968: Changing Attitudes towards Immigration



Issue 1: An Evaluation of the Reasons for Changing Attitudes towards Immigration in the 1920s.

A. Background

Learning Intentions:

- To explain America's demographics before 1920 and the reasons for this.
- To create an introduction.

A Nation of Minorities

The USA is often referred to as the *'land of the free'* and *'the land of opportunity'*. People of many races emigrated from their country of birth to start a new life. The USA was willing to take in people who felt they had to leave their native country. The vast majority of those who journeyed to America did so in an attempt to improve their lives and the prospects for their children.

The paragraph on the right is an extract from the American Declaration of Independence, which was written in 1776.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

This is what it means

We believe that all people in America are equal and have the same rights to live, to be free and to be happy. Nobody can take these rights away from people in America.



George Washington, the first US President

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.



"An American is somebody who came from somewhere else to become someone else"

In 1900, the USA was a mixture of all nationalities of people, so much so that it has often been referred to as a 'melting pot'.

"The great melting pot of America, the place where we are all made Americans...where men of every race and every origin...ought to send their children, and where, being mixed together, they are all infused with the American spirit and developed into the American man and the American woman."



Woodrow Wilson, 1915.

There are few places in the world not represented within America's population. America, 'has acted like a magnet to the world's poor and oppressed as well as to its adventurers and go-getters. Apart for the Native American 'Indians', every other American was either an immigrant or a descendant of people who had emigrated in pursuit of the 'American dream' of freedom, opportunity and prosperity.

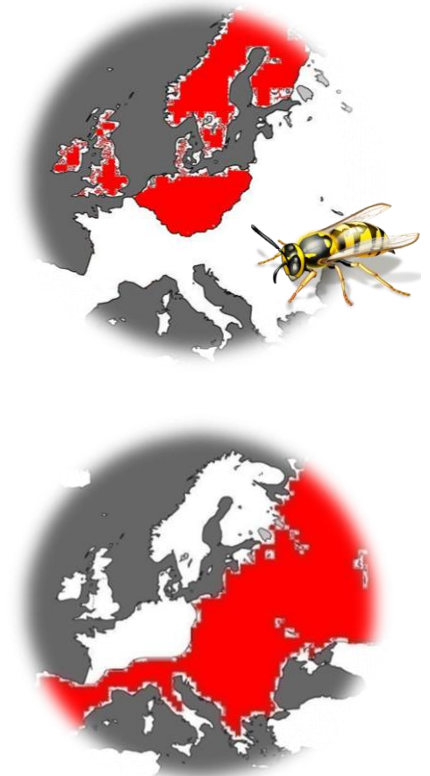
"America is like a huge Melting Pot. We will mix together the races to create a new person – an American"

During the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries, immigration rates were high. As many as 400,000 people per year immigrated to the USA. Between 1850 and 1914, this amounted to 35 million people. In the years between 1900 and 1920, more than 14 million immigrants landed in America so increasing the population to more than 106 million.

Where did immigrants come from?

'Old immigration': Between the 1820s and 1880s, most immigrants to the USA came from mostly Protestant countries of Northern Europe - Britain, Germany and Scandinavia. By 1917, their children were first and second generations of US citizens who were proud of their roots but committed to an ideal view of America that was shaped by their own background and beliefs. They were known as **WASPs** – **White Anglo-Saxon Protestants**.

'New immigration': Between 1880 and 1920, most immigrants were poor and illiterate Catholics or Jews from eastern and southern Europe such as Poland, Italy and Russia; they were held with contempt by many American WASPs. Assimilation was difficult for these new arrivals. They also stood out as they stuck together; wore native dress & spoke their own languages.



The WASPs were not happy as they feared that their culture would be replaced! Immigration also included new arrivals from the Far East such as Japan and China, who settled in America's west-coast states (eg. **California**), but these were very quickly subject to restrictions.

Why did they come to the USA?

During the later 1800s, living and working conditions had worsened for millions of Europeans. At the same time, America entered a period of incredible prosperity. After 1800, the USA needed more unskilled workers to settle the prairies, construct the railroads, and fill the jobs in the new industries. Millions of Europeans, unable to bear the pressures of unemployment, depressions, religious persecution, tyrannical rulers and famines began to see America as a land of opportunity. The promise of work, enough food to eat, and political freedom were more than enough to attract people to immigrate to the USA. The USA was like a magnet of hope and the State of Liberty was the light that promised a bright future. Unfortunately, their dreams of wealth and free land seldom became a reality.

Where did they land in the USA?

From 1892, immigrants were taken to Ellis Island in New York harbour before they were allowed to enter the USA. Immigrants had to wait on board their ship until they were 'processed'. On their arrival, a doctor checked all immigrants: *H* meant suspected heart disease; *F* for blotches or rashes on their face; a circle with a cross in the middle meant 'feeble minded' and it meant that the family would be sent back to their country of origin. For them Ellis Island was an 'Island of tears'. Once the medical inspection was passed, immigrants were questioned on whether they had a job. A landing card was then issued and the immigrant were on their way to becoming an American. They could catch the ferry to New York and start their search for the *American Dream*.



However, the USA, after 300 years of virtually free immigration, suddenly all but shut its doors in the 1920s. The era in which America was a safe haven was gone. Why?

There are many reasons including:

- Prejudice and Racism
- Social Fears
- Economic fears
- Political fears
- USA's isolationism.

Activity 1

The information you gather in this activity will allow you to write an introduction.

1. What was the attitude of the American government towards immigrants in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries? Give examples to prove your views.
2. *"The great melting pot of America, the place where we are all made Americans".*

Explain what is meant by a 'melting pot'. You might want to draw a mind-map or write a paragraph to demonstrate your understanding.



3. Create two immigrants – an 'old' and a 'new' immigrant. You are going to tell their stories. You should include the following in your answers.
 - Who are they?
 - Where did they come from?
 - When did they arrive in the USA?
 - Why did they immigrate to the USA?
 - What aspects of their culture did they bring with them?
 - What was the attitudes towards them/How were they treated on their arrival?
 - Where did they settle and why?

Homework 1

You should now have everything you need to write an introduction. Your teacher will help you with this. You should also use the History Skills Booklet to help you structure your answer.

B. Prejudice and Racism

Learning Intentions:

- To explain why attitudes towards immigrants changed due to the prejudiced views of some Americans in the 1920s.
- To explain why attitudes towards immigrants changed due to the racist views of some Americans in the 1920s.
- To describe the actions taken by the American government took in response to immigration in the 1920s.
- To explain why prejudice and racism in the 1920s was not a reason for changing attitudes towards immigration.

1. Prejudice

Attitudes towards Immigrants in the 1920s

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, American leaders felt immigration helped the United States economy. Businessmen were happy to see waves of immigrants arriving to provide cheap labour for the factories. However, businessmen along with other Americans began to change their minds as the sheer numbers and diversity of people flocking into the USA increased. M. A. Jones suggests that it was not so much the increased numbers of immigrants, but the changing nature of the immigrants that worried the American people.

“America’s old Anglo-Saxon’ sock, they warned, was in danger of being swamped by hordes of ‘new’ immigrants ... In spite of the general prosperity of the 1920s many old-stock Americans were haunted by the fear that their society was being undermined”.

Maldwyn A Jones, *The Limits of Liberty*, 1983

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, most immigrants came from Northern Europe, in particular Britain, Ireland, Germany & Scandinavia. The descendants of these ‘old immigrants’ were generally White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants and became known as WASPs. They viewed themselves as ‘natives’ and thus better than immigrants who were arriving from south-eastern Europe. They were prejudiced against the new immigrants for many reasons.

Religious Prejudice

By 1914, the majority of immigrants arriving from Southern and Eastern Europe were escaping social revolutions, poverty, persecution and unemployment. The 'new' immigrants were largely illiterate and unskilled. New immigrants confronted substantial and escalating hostility. Americans were intimidated by the size and diversity of the foreign intrusion. Protestant Americans had specific grounds for objecting to these newcomers:

Catholics: Before 1830, the USA had been almost exclusively Protestant but by 1860, the number of Catholics exceeded 3 million, which was one tenth of the population. A significant proportion of immigrants were Roman Catholic – Irish, Italians and Hispanics. The attachment to Catholicism generated cohesion among Irish Americans and American Protestants. Irish immigrants were confronted with demeaning stereotypes and violent anti-Catholic prejudices as WASPs commonly assumed that the Irish were ignorant, filthy and clannish people incapable of integration into American life.

Jews: By 1913 there were 1.25 million Jews in New York's city's lower east side and were nicknamed 'Kikes'. Hostility was directed against Jewish immigrants particularly those who, once they had settled, became successful and prosperous. Even Henry Ford bought a local newspaper and used it as a vehicle for attacking Jews. The articles in Ford's newspaper blamed the Jews for everything from the Bolshevik Revolution to bootlegged liquor. They also accused the Jews of conspiring to enslave Christianity and destroy the "Anglo-Saxon" way of life. Jews suffered discrimination in employment and became targets for the KKK.



Cultural Prejudice

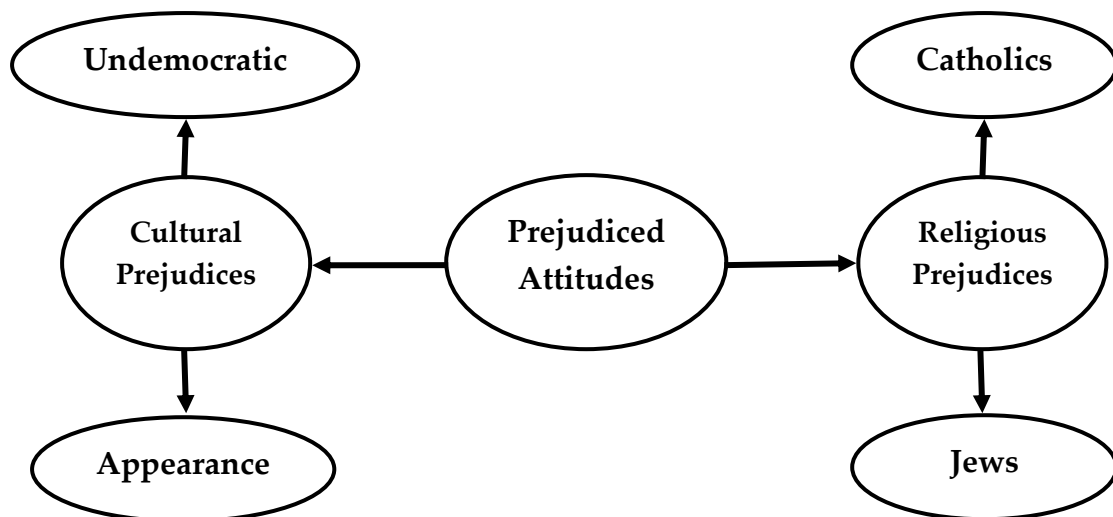
Undemocratic: Almost all immigrants had left non-democratic societies and tended to view the law and Government as institutions that always catered to rulers and statesmen and therefore not to be trusted. Americans saw this unfamiliarity with democracy as contrary to the American democratic principles and their general mistrust of Government loomed as a threat to the constitution of US according to the Republican Governments of the 1920s.

Appearance: the physical appearance of some immigrants frightened Americans. Many of the new arrivals were malnourished, and with deformities caused by vitamin deficiencies and poor diet. Immigrants sometimes continued to wear their own native clothing and at the time that was regarded as out of place on America's 'modern' streets.

Because of this, immigrants were an easy target for ill-informed prejudice and racism by 'native' Americans. With each boatload, Americans worried about the influence of foreign blood on the American population as a whole and by 1921 were welcoming the federal legislation that finally dammed the flow from abroad.

Activity 2

1. What does Maldwyn A. Jones in 'The Limits of Liberty', 1983 argue was the concern of many Americans towards immigrants?
2. Identify the key reasons why many Americans were prejudiced against new immigrants. You can do this as a mind-map or in a way which suits you. You should have at least 2 pieces of evidence for each area.



Homework 2

Now that you have gathered your evidence for this part of factor one, you are ready to use it to write up the first paragraph of your first factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

2. Racism

Nativism

The 100% Americanism Movement

The effect of high levels of immigration increased the WASPs sense of superiority and their determination to maintain and protect racial “purity”. In the early 1920s, politicians called for restrictions to be placed on the numbers and types of immigrants. This desire was known as 100% Americanism and the people who promoted it are often referred to as ‘nativists’, people who were born in America as opposed to abroad. Nativist Americans believed that immigrants were a danger to the American way of life. They spoke out against the ‘alien menace’.

The drive for immigration restrictions in the 1920s was based on pseudo-scientific racism commonly seen in the years prior to and during the First World War. Academics and some politicians, with little knowledge of either science or public affairs, were accepted as experts on ‘race’, although their writings revealed neither insight nor good judgement. They claimed to have ‘scientific’ evidence that the new immigrants from southeast Europe were racially inferior. In Woodrow Wilson’s *History of the American People* in 1902, he even compared the ‘men of the sturdy stock of the north of Europe’ with the ‘more sordid and hopeless elements.’ They were afraid that new immigrants would destroy American culture and many activists were pledged to protect the purity of the American ideal.

Most influential of all were the widely read articles of Kenneth Roberts, a journalist and novelist, in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He argued for immigration laws to be revised to admit fewer Polish Jews who were “human parasites”. He believed that immigration had to be restricted because it would inevitably produce “a hybrid race of people as worthless and futile as the good-for-nothing mongrels of Central America and South Eastern Europe ... If America doesn’t keep out the queer alien mongrelized people of Southern and Eastern Europe, her crop of citizens will eventually be dwarfed and mongrelized in turn.”

“The man of the old stock is being crowded out of many country districts by foreigners, just as he is today being literally driven off the streets of New York City by swarms of Polish Jews. These immigrants adopt the same language of the Native American, they wear his clothes, they steal his name and they are beginning to take his women, but seldom adopt his religion or understand his ideals ... older immigrants are skilled, thrifty, hardworking like native born Americans and recent immigrants from southern and eastern Europe are unskilled, ignorant, predominantly Catholic or Jewish & not easily assimilated into American culture.”

Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race*, 1916.

Nativist intellectuals also wrote articles and books. They preached sermons from church pulpits and university lecterns but the majority of people never heard this. More serious was the hostility generated by ordinary people who held nativist views. Such nativists believed that immigrants threatened their economic and social position. For example, many middle class Americans dreaded job competition and congested cities full of foreigners, who they distrusted.

Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan had died out in the 1870s but reformed in Georgia in 1915 in the wake of high levels of immigration. In true nativist tradition, it focused on the evils of Catholicism and anti-Semitism. The KKK naturally appealed to the WASPs who believed that their dream of America was about to be shattered. By 1924 the KKK were openly parading through the streets of Washington D.C. The Klan's appeal spread from the south to the western and northern states, where Catholics and Jews, as well as blacks became the target of their threats and violence. Hiram Wesley Evans, Grand Imperial Wizard of the KKK made his position clear:



"The vast horde of immigrants who have reached our shores ... Italian immigrants, Irish catholic malcontents, Russian Jews, Finns, Letts, Lithuanians of the lowest class"

These groups are a real reflection of the extent of anti-alienism in the USA at the time. This clearly shows that bigotry, prejudice and racism gave rise to the soon to be passed anti-immigration legislation.

Activity 3

1. Kenneth Roberts used his column in the *Saturday Evening Post* to promote nativists ideas. You are going to write about the attitudes of nativist Americans towards immigration as Kenneth Roberts' would in his newspaper column. You can use inflammatory language if you are quoting another nativist. Your article must demonstrate prejudice. Your article should include:

- Who were nativists?
- What were their aims and beliefs?
- What were their concerns?
- The role and appeal of the KKK in the 100% Americanism Movement
- Where did they get their evidence from?
- How did they promote their attitudes to Americans?

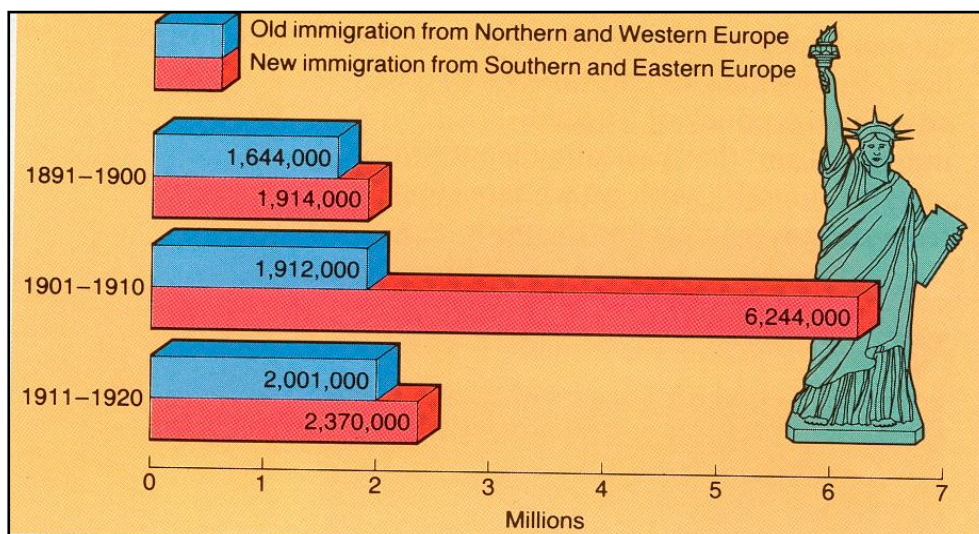
Homework 3

Now that you have gathered your evidence for this part of factor one, you are ready to use it to write up the second paragraph of your first factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

3. Legislation

The Dillingham Commission

The US government wanted to know more about the 'problem of immigration' so in 1907 established the Dillingham Commission. The Dillingham Commission concluded that from the 1880s onwards, immigrants had come mainly from Southern and Eastern Europe and that these immigrants from places such as Austria-Hungary, Russia, Italy, Turkey, Lithuania, Rumania and Greece were inferior to the Wasp-type American who had arrived before 1880.



The Commission claimed that immigrants from southern and eastern Europe posed a serious threat to American society and culture; therefore immigration should be greatly reduced. The Commission recommended that literacy tests be used to make it harder for 'inferior immigrants' to get into the USA, thus reducing immigration. Nevertheless, thousands still found their way into America. The commission's overall findings provided the rationale for the politically and economically inspired immigration restriction acts of the 1920s, which favoured immigration from northern and western Europe.

Immigration Acts

Perhaps the most obvious example that shows just how important prejudice and racism was in the changing attitudes towards immigration can be shown through the passing of two pieces of legislation.

Between June 1919 and June 1921, more than 800,000 people entered the USA – 65% from Southern and Eastern Europe. The Consuls in Europe warned that millions more were preparing to leave. By February 1921, Ellis Island was so jammed that immigration authorities had to divert ships to Boston. Alarmed almost to the point of panic, Congress rushed through an emergency act to restrict immigration; it passed the House of Representatives in a few hours and was adopted by the Senate soon after by a vote of 78-1.



The **Emergency Immigration Law Act [1921]** allowed only about 350,000 immigrants to enter the USA every year. By carefully organising a quota system, the American Government could make sure that large numbers of people from 'undesirable' countries were kept out. This law imposed an annual limit on immigration from any European Country, limiting it to 3% of the number of nationals from that country who were living in the USA in 1911.

The quota system favoured immigrants from 'Old Immigrant' countries and kept out 'New Immigrants'. Four-fifths of those allowed to enter the USA after 1921 came from Britain and Ireland, Germany, Holland, Switzerland and Scandinavia. Few if any were permitted from South European countries, none at all from East Asia. Most new immigrants after 1921 were therefore white and Protestant. This act openly discriminated against non-WASPs based on prejudice and race.

Sentiment for a more lasting form of immigration restriction soon gained strength. In 1924, Congress passed the **National Origins Act [Johnson-Reed Act]**, with little opposition. This Act drastically cut down the total of immigrants. The proportion from each country allowed to enter the USA each year was lowered to 2% based on the sizes of national groups at the time of the 1890 census and set an absolute limit of 150,000 immigrants per annum. 85% of quotas favoured those from Northern and Western Europe and forbade all Oriental immigration – marked in Japan by a day of National mourning. However, the Act did not apply to Mexicans, as cheap labour was needed during the times of fruit harvest. The law aimed at freezing the country ethnically by sharply restricting the 'new' immigration from Southern and Eastern

Europe. In 1928, the balance was slightly altered when the 1910 Census, which accounted for more Eastern Europeans, was used as the basis of the quotas.

The Act went further as in 1929 only 120,000 immigrants a year were allowed into the USA and 85% of all places were reserved for Northern and Western Europeans. This demonstrates that it was not necessarily the number of immigrants coming in that America's objected to, but where they came from, making racism & prejudice a very important factor in understanding the changing attitudes towards immigration in the 1920s.

Activity 4

1. Explain the findings and recommendations of the Dillingham Commission.
2. Describe the immigration Acts that were passed by the American government in the 1920s.

	Emergency Immigration Law Act	National Origins Act [Johnson-Reed Act]
Date		
Reasons passed		
Number of immigrants allowed in per annum		
Favoured		
Discriminated against		
Overall impact		

Homework 4

Now that you have gathered your evidence for this part of factor one, you are ready to use it to write up the third paragraph of your first factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

4. Anti-Immigration Legislation Before 1920

The USA, after 300 years of virtually free immigration, suddenly all but shut its doors in the 1920s. The era in which America was a safe haven was gone. However, with scrutiny it can be seen that the immigration controls introduced in the 1920s were not the radical changes they may appear. Indeed, immigration controls were apparent before World War I. It can be argued that immigration controls were not a new phenomenon in the 1920s.

It would be wrong to think that immigration controls were a sudden step taken by the US Government in the 1920s. The first calls for immigration restrictions were made in the 19th century, during which time clear signs of anti-immigrant feeling became apparent. Anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism were common, as was the widespread fear of immigrant radicalism. The movement that called for a curb on immigration was born out of these fears. In 1884, the **Immigration Restriction League** was founded in Boston. It claimed that America was in danger of being swamped by 'lesser breeds' and campaigned for the literacy test as a way of making sure that many of the 'new' immigrants did not get into America. A series of immigration laws were passed.

- In 1882, the first **Federal Immigration Act** was passed placing restrictions on convicts, lunatics and paupers entering the country.
- The **Chinese Exclusion Act**, 1882 passed in California that excluded Chinese immigrants entering the state closely followed it. In 1902, Chinese immigration to the USA was made illegal.
- In 1907, the **Gentleman's Agreement** which followed was an attempt by the authorities in San Francisco to segregate Japanese and white-American schooling. After provoking great anger in Japan, the President was forced to see that San Francisco withdrew the segregation, on the condition that Japanese labourers were denied passports that would allow them to immigrate to the USA.
- The **Alien Land Law** of 1913 forbade 'aliens' from owning any agricultural land in California. It was meant to apply to all recent immigrants but was more directed at the Japanese. Eleven other states quickly followed the Californian example.
- The 1917 **Immigration Act** increased the Head Tax that new immigrants had to pay, extended the list of 'undesirables' and created a 'barred zone' forbidding immigration from most of Asia. It also finally introduced a literacy test marking a major shift in American policy.

Therefore, calls for immigration controls began in the 19th century and had widespread support by 1920.

Thus, it can be seen that the idea of immigration controls was not new, but had its roots in the early 19th century. By 1914, many people were in favour of some sort of restriction on immigration. This was partly because of the large numbers of immigrants arriving in the USA each year, especially between 1900 and 1914, but it probably had more to do with the changing nature of immigrants. World War One saw an increase in xenophobia (fear of foreigners) and nativism. ‘Old’ immigrants were afraid of losing old, ‘traditional’ American values (WASP). The cultural changes were blamed on the ‘new’ immigrants. Many people thought that if they could just get rid of the ‘new’ immigrants, life would return to their slow paced ‘Golden Age’ of their fore fathers. This, and the fear of a rush of immigrants fleeing the war-torn countries of southeastern Europe, was the immediate reasons for the passing of the immigration controls in the 1920s.

Activity 5

1. Immigration controls were not a new phenomenon in the 1920s as prejudice and racist attitudes were evident in the 19th century. Describe the immigration acts that were passed before the 1920s to limit immigration.

	Federal Immigration Act	Chinese Exclusion Act	Gentleman’s Agreement	Alien Land Law	Immigration Act
Date					
Reasons passed					
Number of immigrants allowed in per annum					
Favoured					
Discriminated against					
Overall impact					

Homework 5

Now that you have gathered your evidence for this part of factor one, you are ready to use it to write up the fourth paragraph of your first factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

C. Social Fears

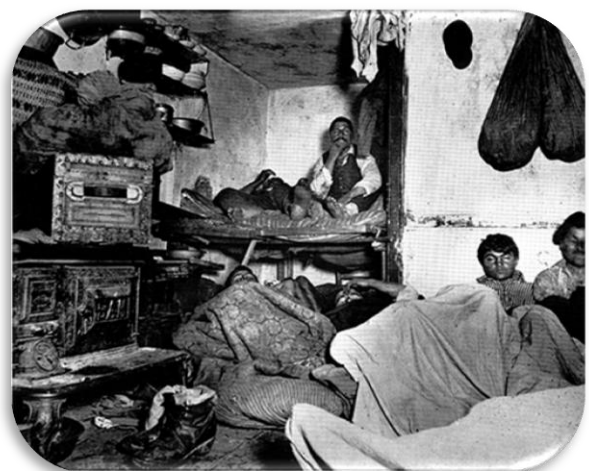
Learning Intentions:

- To explain why attitudes towards immigrants changed due to the impact of immigration on social issues.

Housing

By 1920, many otherwise humane and broad-minded Americans just did not like foreigners. The flood of new immigrants increased during World War 1 as millions came to escape the war and the economic depression that followed. They congregated in the rapidly growing cities at which they had arrived. The majority of immigrants settled in four large cities: Chicago, Boston, Pittsburgh & New York. These immigrants “enclaves” became identified by names such as *Little Italy*, *Irishtown* and *Chinatown*. They wanted to be close to other people who spoke their language & felt safer in their own communities who continued the traditions and customs of their home countries. They had their own shops selling their own food, their own forms of entertainment and sometimes their own schools. Many *nativists* were worried that foreign cultures and religions would threaten the American way of life. These heighten suspicion towards immigrants.

Immigrants had little money and received low wages so could only afford to live in atrocious conditions, in the cheapest housing in the worst areas of the city. Whole families, sometimes 10 or 12 people lived in one room. They were damp, dark and filthy with no water supply, toilets or drains - rubbish and sewage was thrown into backcourts or streets. However, landlords could still put rents up due to the high competition. Poor Americans were angered by the increased pressure put on already scarce housing by the arrival of immigrants, especially in the poorer areas of the city. This resulted in natives becoming hostile towards immigrants as they struggled to get a home. The areas in which they lived became run down and overcrowded: ghettos. Immigrants were blamed for these poor conditions which made the country less desirable to live in, even though in reality it was the responsibility of the city authorities rather than the immigrants.



Crime

The increasing population of cities was accompanied by social problems such as rising crime. Immigrants were blamed for social disorders that burdened American society, especially in the cities. The soaring crime rates in neighbourhoods with high concentrations of immigrants were used by journalists, reformers and politicians who favoured restricting immigration as proof of the bad influence of immigrants on their environment. Out of the 17,328 persons arrested in New York in 1858 14,638 were foreigners, 10,477 of these were Irish. In the 1910s and 1920s, Italian immigrants were thought to be connected to the Mafia, and high profile gangsters like Al Capone seemed to confirm this image.

However, further investigation reveals a more complex interpretation. Because taverns, gambling houses and brothels were not tolerated in the refined neighbourhoods of the American citizens, they often could only exist in immigrant enclaves. In such establishments, immigrants sought temporary escape from cramped housing and their grey and depressing lives.

Settlement workers (charity organisations, social workers) were more realistic in acknowledging that abominable living conditions, sickness, fear and loneliness were the real causes of crime. Most of the immigrant arrests were for crimes of poverty such as drunkenness, vagrancy or petty theft. Social workers argued that the thief who stole small amounts of food, clothing or money was desperately attempting to cope with poverty and hopelessness, rather than responding to an innate criminality. The facts suggest that the criminality of foreign born in America was no larger than that of the native population. Yet the myth of immigrant criminality persisted. This shows America already had preconceived judgements about people of a certain nationality.

Prohibition

Many 'native' Americans despised the lifestyle of certain immigrant groups especially the Germans and Italians whose cultural traditions involved what seemed to be the large consumption of alcohol. This offended the rigid sensitivities of the native immigrants. As early as the 1820s Puritans (*anti-Catholics*) saw their Sabbaths ignored by drunken Irish navvies fighting, swearing and gambling in the slums of Boston and New York. They regarded the immigrants as lower class.

A growing temperance lobby pushed for a law prohibiting the sale and consumption of alcohol. In 1919 **the Volstead Act** prohibiting the sale and consumption of alcohol in the USA was passed. Prohibition ended after 12 years when the moral arguments against alcohol became moot when it became apparent that the illegal trade that sprung up had led to organised crime, bloodshed and no real change in attitudes

towards drinking. Many of the communities that became involved with the illegal trade in alcohol – either through imports or through illicit brewing - were based in immigrant communities: Catholic-Irish in New Jersey, European Jewish immigrants in New York and Italians in Chicago. This provided work for many new or recent immigrants, but also set them firmly on a path of crime, which only added to the stereotypes held about immigrants.

Education

By the 1920s, some new immigrants were beginning to pound on the doors of America's top, most prestigious universities. Schools such as Columbia, Harvard, Yale and Princeton responded by trying to refuse their entry. Wealthy private educational institutions, protected by influential patrons and graduates, were impervious to the efforts of political bosses to allow the students to enrol at their universities. Pressure groups that formed to aid immigrant access to education had to influence and change public opinion and privately persuade influential people. However, such groups were little match for the WASP establishment that opposed them.

Activity 6

1. Attitudes towards immigrants changed due to social issues. Describe what conditions were like in the cities for immigrants when they arrived. You should then explain why this made the attitudes of many Americans change towards immigrants. You should include a minimum of 2 developed points for each area.

You can lay your work out in a style that suits you. You might want to draw a city scene and depict what life was like for immigrants. You might want to do a mind-map. Or you might want to write out your answers in formal prose.

Homework 6

Now that you have gathered all your evidence for this factor, you are ready to use it to write up your second factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

D. Economic Fears

Learning Intentions:

- To explain why attitudes towards immigrants changed due to the impact of immigration on the economy.

Competition for Jobs

While World War One had boosted the American economy: approximately 9 million people worked in war industries such as steel, wheat fields (food for allies) & munitions factories, while another 4 million were serving in the armed forces. When the war ended, wartime industries reduced production resulting in people losing jobs and war industries were left without contracts. As factories closed and people lost their jobs, unemployment more than doubled from 5.2% to 11.7% by 1921. Troops returned home seeking jobs in the already saturated labour market. There was increased anger towards the seemingly endless pool of cheap labouring immigrants and they were blamed for 'stealing jobs'. Most of the 'new' immigrants were unskilled and therefore looked for work in America's growing industries in the cities. In this climate of economic slump and hostility towards 'new' immigrants, the possibility of Europeans flocking to America to seek refuge and work at the end of the war was taken very seriously.



Poor Working Conditions

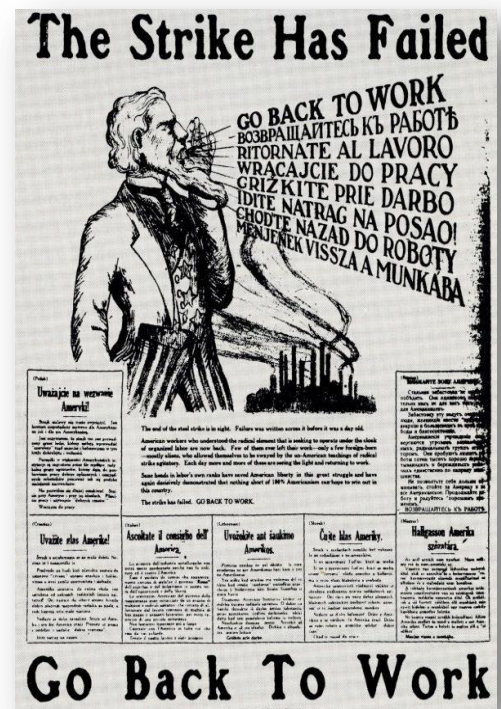


There was a belief that those immigrants who could not speak English seemed to be taking American jobs. Many of these immigrants were unskilled and desperate for work; therefore, they were willing to work long hours, for low pay in harsh working conditions. The acceptance of these poor working and living conditions angered poor, native-born Americans who believed that the abundance of cheap immigrant labour kept wages low and condemned them to poverty and terrible conditions along with immigrants. Trade unions believed that

Italian or Polish workers who were prepared to work for longer hours and for lower wages wrecked anything they did to improve conditions or wages. Employers would not negotiate with trade unions to improve working conditions because there was a wealth of workers who would accept the current pay & conditions. Industrialists, on the other hand, relished the abundance of cheap, unskilled labour for their factories: many of these jobs were so dangerous, dirty or low paid that 'Americans' would not do them.

Strikebreakers

Following World War I, 'American' labour went on strike as emerging trade unions fought for better wages, shorter working hours and better conditions. Because the immigrant population was desperate for money, many were employed as strikebreakers to replace the strikers. Trade unions resented the 'new' immigrants because they had no bargaining power when employers knew that they could always use cheap immigrants to break their strikes. Trade unions even backed the idea of a literacy test for immigrants believing that many unskilled workers would be denied entry into the USA, freeing up jobs for Americans. Indeed the idea of the literacy test for immigrants was debated 32 times in Congress prior to its introduction in 1917.



Wall Street Crash

Following the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the economic depression that followed, life became even tougher for recent immigrants. Contraction of the economy led to a rise in racial and ethnic discrimination. Some employers and white workers insisted that white citizens be given preference in employment.

- On Californian fruit farms, white people were employed before Mexicans, who traditionally undertook the work.
- Chinese immigrants in New York found problems in their main line of work – laundry.

Therefore, immigrants became associated with the city slums and everything else that was considered wrong with America in the early 20th century. The organisations representing American workers resented the 'new' immigrants, as they were willing to work for little pay in poor conditions. There was a concern that the traditional

'small town' America was slipping away and was quickly being replaced by an industrialised nation, helped along the way by immigration.

Activity 7

1. Explain the reasons why Americans were angry about increased immigration in the years after World War 1. You should mention at least two developed points for each of the following:
 - The economic impact World War I had on the USA
 - The conditions immigrants were willing to work in
 - The anger felt by Trade Unions
 - The impact the Wall Street Crash had on immigrants

Homework 7

Now that you have gathered all your evidence for this factor, you are ready to use it to write up your third factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

E. Political Fears

Learning Intentions:

- To explain why American's attitudes towards immigrants changed due to fear of political revolution

The 'Red Scare'

Immigrants found themselves under attack for political reasons. They were believed to be Communists or anarchists. Communists believe that the capitalist system is damaging to the interests of the masses and that workers must unite and overturn it by revolutionary means. They believe the wealth of the nation should be fairly distributed so that workers can share the wealth created by their labour therefore creating a classless society. They also believe in the state ownership of all land, natural resources and industry therefore no private ownership. The Russian Revolution in 1917 had established the first Communist state committed to spreading revolution against capitalism.



Communist ideas are the exact opposite of what most Americans believe in – free enterprise, competition and hatred of government interference. The hardening of American immigration policy can be explain through the fear of Communism being brought to their shores by the 'new immigrants'. As 'new immigrants' from Russia continued to arrive in large numbers following the First World War this created a fear that they were also bringing with them the politics of murder and revolution. It is estimated that there were over 150,000 anarchists or communists in the USA in 1920, which represented only 0.1% of the overall population of the USA. One journalist said that the *"whole lot were about as dangerous as a flea on an elephant"*. Despite this, many Americans were terrified of a communist revolution in the USA like that in Russia.

Following World War I, many Americans were alarmed by the pro-Russian leanings of new organisations with the country: the International Workers of the World (the *Wobblies*) and the 'American Socialist Party' were well know objectors to World War I, and to the minds of many Americans therefore, unpatriotic. This led them open to attack. Any activity associated with them was suspicious. There was an almost irrational fear of communism, anarchism and socialism. This led to further intolerance and suspicion towards immigrants and convinced many Americans to demand that action be taken to stop the flow of revolutionaries into the country. Local police departments and the Federal Justice Department harassed those who

supported Socialist or Communist ideas. Therefore, the spectre of the Russian Revolution, coupled with the economic recession set off the 'Red Scare' period. Following World War I, a series of strikes seemed to confirm the 'Red' threat. They led many to believe that a revolution was imminent. On 21st Jan 1919 35,000 shipyard workers in Seattle went on strike. By February 6th this increased to 60,000. Despite the absence of any violence or arrests, the strikers were immediately labeled as 'Reds' and were charged with trying to incite revolution. Seattle Mayor Ole Hansen, blamed the *Wobblies*. Violent strikes and riots soon followed in other industries such as the textile, railroad, steel and coal industries. The press reported that these strikes were "*conspiracies against the government*", and "*plots to establish Communism*", further creating this idea of a 'red scare'. On September 9th 1919, the Boston police force went on strike. A panic that "Reds" were behind the strike took over Boston and the policemen were called "agents of Lenin". On September 13, Police Commissioner Edwin Curtis announced that the striking policemen would not be allowed to return and that the city would hire a new police force, effectively ending the strike!



Communist fears: Palmer Raids – August 1919



The house of America's Attorney General, Mitchell Palmer, was blown up. Palmer, an ambitious man who one day wanted to be President, believed that taking an anti-Communists and anti-anarchist stand would make him popular. He said the bombing was the work of a radical element and pledged to purge it by whatever steps were necessary. Palmer thought he would find many of these radicals in the immigrant community.

He set up the General Intelligence Division within the Department of Justice, run by his assistant J. Edgar Hoover. This division spied on Communists and others considered dangerous. In January 1920, Hoover's agents and local police organised raids on Communists in 33 cities, arresting 6,000 'foreign radicals' and putting them in jail without trial. They were held in filthy conditions, were beaten up and forced to sign confessions. Most had to be released due to lack of evidence, however, 600 people were deported. Palmer then warned of a May Day demonstration, organised

police and special troops but the riot did not happen and people lost faith in him. The hysteria passed almost as suddenly as it began. The Bolshevik threat had been exaggerated. Most immigrants were too preoccupied with adjusting to their new environment to consider subversive political activity of any kind. However, the Palmer Raids showed that WASP America felt threatened by the arrival of new political ideas and shows the move to isolate themselves further.

Anarchist fears: The case of Sacco and Vanzetti

Distrust over people with different ideas and who came from Southeastern Europe reached its peak with the trial of Italian immigrants Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. They were anarchists and held radical, revolutionary ideas leading some people to think they might be Communists. On May 5th 1920, Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested in Massachusetts. They were charged with murdering two men during an armed robbery. They spoke no English, but were found carrying guns. Their lawyer put forward the defence that they were elsewhere when the robbery took place and claimed they were being persecuted for their well-known political beliefs. There was little concrete evidence against them and many American felt the two men would be found guilty, not because they were robbers and murders, but because they were immigrants and had strong radical ideas about changing the US political system. The judge in the case privately called them *'those anarchist bastards'*. Vanzetti himself said in April 1927, *"I am suffering because I am a radical. Indeed I am a radical. I have suffered because I was an Italian. Indeed, I am an Italian"*. They were found guilty and sentenced to death.

Many people believed that the two men were innocent and despite serious doubts and a massive worldwide campaign, they were executed in the electric chair in 1927. This shocked many people in the liberal minded north of the USA who believed that in a democracy all people should be free to believe what they wanted. However many in rural America supported the executions as they believed that anyone who wanted to change the American political system was already guilty and should be hanged. They were coming to believe that the cities were filled with 'foreigners' who would not adopt the American ways and were determined to overthrow the American way of life.

"But what good is the evidence and what good is the argument? They are determined to kill us regardless of evidence, of law, of decency, of everything. If they give us a delay tonight, it will only mean they will kill us next week. Let us finish tonight. I'm weary of waiting seven years to die, when they know all the time they intend to kill us."

Sacco, August 22, 1927, fifteen hours before he and Vanzetti were executed.

Political influence

Immigrants had little influence in the political system until they became naturalised US citizens and gained voting rights. Even then, they were not all equally enthusiastic about exercising their voting rights. The immigrant population helped increase the number of Congressmen who represented states such as New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Illinois and Ohio but the American-born population continued to determine the Congressional and Presidential politics of their respective states. Immigrants who became eligible to vote did not do so as a single entity: they expressed party preferences in different states. In 1920, Poles tended to back Woodrow Wilson who was advocating the creation of the new nation of Poland, whereas the Italians, East Europeans, Irish and Germans did not. Therefore, the immigrant vote was too divided. At the state and local levels, party bosses understood the political potential of the new immigrants. Some immigrants were happy enough to vote for the politician who bribed them the most. However, in cities, those politicians who protected immigrants from hostility and looked after their needs tended to get the immigrant vote.

However, some immigrants also became politically powerful. As early as the 1880s Irish immigrants in New York dominated the political system. An organisation called Tammany Hall influenced city politics. It attracted a lot of support from immigrant Irish people by helping immigrants find jobs and become US citizens and by assisting the poor. Any ambitious man had to win influence with the Irish controlled city government if he were to be successful, which did sit well with WASPs.

Activity 8

1. Describe what many Americans believed the 'typical' Russian immigrant to be like in 1920. You should ensure you have identified at least 3 developed points. How you lay out your answer is up to you.
2. Why were Americans so fearful of Communism? You should ensure you have identified at least 3 developed points. How you lay out your answer is up to you. Were these rational fears?
3. What actions did many so-called 'Reds' take which alarmed many Americans? You should ensure you have identified at least 3 developed points. How you lay out your answer is up to you.

4. Explain the actions taken by the American government to deal with the 'Red threat'. You should ensure you have identified at least 3 developed points. How you lay out your answer is up to you.
5. Explain why the Sacco and Vanzetti case divided the American public.
6. Explain the reasons why some Americans would have been alarmed at the prospect of immigrants gaining political influence. You should ensure you have identified at least 3 developed points. How you lay out your answer is up to you.

Homework 8

Now that you have gathered all your evidence for this factor, you are ready to use it to write up your fourth factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

F. Isolationism and World War I

Learning Intentions:

- To explain why Americans' attitudes towards immigrants changed due to the impact of World War I

Isolationism

To remain isolated from foreign countries e.g. not become involved in other countries problems. In 1796, President George Washington stated that the US should “*steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world.*” His warning against foreign ‘entanglements’ served as a fundamental principle of US foreign policy until 1917. Clearly, World War I did not cause isolationism, but it definitely increased in the years after and is thus an important factor in explaining why attitudes towards immigrants changed.

Isolationism and World War I

When World War I broke out in 1914, President Wilson repeatedly urged the American people to be “*neutral in thought as well as action*” and not to become involved in Europe’s ‘Civil War’. The USA had kept out of all the negotiations between the European powers in the years preceding 1914 that led to the creation of the two alliance systems. At first American public opinion was firmly on the side of neutrality. Most Americans had little or no interest in world affairs and supported the policy of isolationism – keeping well out of foreign problems and concentrating on its own business. Americans, they believed, had no reason to become involved in the arguments of other nations.

When America entered the war in April 1917, it soon emerged that sympathies in America were mixed, which caused great tensions and a split in American society. WASP Americans supported the Allied Powers as Britain and France seemed to represent democracy whilst Germany seemed to represent autocracy (*one person with all the power*) and militarism. The 1910 census showed that out of the US population of 92 million, 32 million were first or second generation immigrants who retained close ties to their home countries. More than 10 million were immigrants from the nations of the Central Powers and supported their mother country e.g. Germany & Italy.

"Hyphenated Americanism"

World War I sped up the process of the movement to limit immigration. During the war, everything was done to 'sell' Americans the war and generate hatred towards the Germans. Soon, anyone and anything that smacked of foreign culture became suspect, and patriotism often degenerated into an ugly xenophobia.

"Dislike of foreigners had been a traditional plank of American conservatism throughout much of the history of the Republic. The age was one of hyperbolic expressions of loyalty to America and of super abundant patriotism."

Daniel Snowman, *America Since 1920*, 1968

World War I revealed that many immigrants in the USA still had some lingering sympathies for their mother country. This of course was a double standard as many 'old immigrant' Americans, still talked fondly about Scotland, which was considered acceptable. Former president Theodore Roosevelt denounced "*hyphenated Americanism*", insisting that dual loyalties were impossible in wartime. President Wilson said, "*any man who carries a hyphen around with him carries a dagger that he is ready to plunge into the vitals of this Republic*". Life for foreign-born Americans during and after the war was not an easy one.

German-Americans: In 1917, there were around 8 million German-Americans living in the USA. At the outbreak of war, many were criticised for being too sympathetic towards the German Empire and were immediately suspected as sympathizers of the Kaiser.

- German-Americans were beaten, tarred and feathered
- Families with German sounding surnames changed them e.g. Müller to Miller, Schmidt to Smith
- The German dish of sauerkraut became known as 'liberty cabbage'
- German languages were stopped in colleges and schools

Irish-Americans: During World War I, 4.5 million Irish-Americans lived in the USA. Many harboured a deep-rooted hatred towards Britain due to the English oppression they had endured in Ireland since the 17th century. Therefore, they were suspected as being dangerously anti-British and potentially anti-American saboteurs, especially if they were Catholic.

Italian-Americans: Italian anarchist organisations often openly criticised America's involvement in the war. Many Italian publications caused so much concern that their editors were arrested and deported at the end of war.

Isolationism after World War I

Involvement in World War I was a break in the tradition of US foreign policy. After World War I, most Americans were weary from fighting in a world war - 117,465 Americans had died & 205,690 were wounded. Most Americans wanted a return to isolationism, which can be shown through the refusal of the USA to join the League of Nations (an organisation that had been suggested by the President Wilson in the first place). They were afraid that membership of the League of Nations would involve them permanently in the affairs of Europe. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Leader of the Republican opposition to President Wilson [Democrat], successfully led the campaign against the League. Republicans were hostile to Wilson anyway, but they were also concerned to protect American sovereignty and the freedom to act independently. They argued that the decision to go to war should rest solely with the US Congress and not with the League. Another Republican, Senator Borah, declared he would vote against the League even if Jesus Christ returned to earth to argue in its favour, and many others were just as inflexible. Many Senators feared that if the USA got involved then it might soon be dragged into another European war.

By the end of the war, it was clear that attitudes towards immigration had changed and the 'open-door' was firmly closing. Politicians could not ignore this change as America's attitude towards immigration clearly changed and became more firm. In the post-war period America returned to isolating herself from Europe (*especially Eastern and Southern Europe*) by restricting the flow of immigrants through the quota system seen in the Emergency Immigration Law Act [1921] and the National Origins Act [Johnson-Reed Act], 1924 (see factor 1).

"After the armistice (in 1918) however, the anti-foreign fears and hatreds of those who were 100% Americans were transferred from the German element to alien revolutionaries and radicals."

Maldwyn A Jones, *American Immigration*, 1960

These Acts are all clear evidence that the USA wanted to protect the interests of 'native born Americans' from immigrant competition. Isolationism, caused by World War I, was a determination to curb immigration, to avoid 'alien contamination' and to preserve the old American stock ethnically before it was too late.

Pre-World War I

However, it would be wrong to think that World War I caused American isolationism. America had been following an isolationist policy before the war. An example of an isolationist policy occurred in 1913 when the government passed the

Alien Land Law that forbade Japanese and other Asian immigrants in California from owning farmland - 11 other states quickly followed California's example.

Activity 9

1. Describe what is meant by isolationism and explain the reasons why many Americans were in favour of it in the years before World War I. You should ensure you have identified at least 3 developed points. How you lay out your answer is up to you.
2. *Patriotism or xenophobia?* Describe what life was like for 'hyphenated Americans' during World War I. You should ensure you have identified at least 5 developed points. How you lay out your answer is up to you. Why did this make many Americans hypocrites?
3. Explain the reasons why Americans wanted a return to isolationism after World War I. You should ensure you have identified at least 3 developed points. How you lay out your answer is up to you.

Homework 9

Now that you have gathered all your evidence for this factor, you are ready to use it to write up your fifth factor. You are also ready to conclude on the most significant reason why attitudes towards immigration changed. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.