

Section Summary

IMMIGRATION AND URBANIZATION

There were two great waves of immigration in the United States. One was during the 1840s and 1850s and another between 1880 and 1920. Immigrants came to the United States to find work and for the promise of political and religious freedom. They contributed to American culture in many ways.

Starting in 1892, most immigrants from Europe first landed at **Ellis Island**, just outside New York City. Government clerks asked the immigrants a series of questions. If authorities believed the newcomers posed a risk to public health, they would demand that the immigrants return to Europe. From the early 1850s to 1882, hundreds of thousands of Chinese immigrants came to the West Coast. From 1910 to 1940, most Asian immigrants arrived at **Angel Island** in San Francisco Bay. They experienced much harsher conditions than those immigrants arriving at Ellis Island. Some waited months or even years before they were allowed into the United States.

Both foreign-born immigrants and American-born farmers moved to the cities. New forms of transportation made possible the first **suburbs**. These were residential areas around the cities. Poorer residents lived in densely populated urban ghettos, or areas where one ethnic or racial group dominates. One of the biggest problems facing urban dwellers was overcrowding. Multistory buildings were subdivided into many homes, often housing twenty families each. These buildings were called **tenements**.

Industrialization and urbanization gave rise to a growing middle class. Industries needed skilled white-collar workers, such as engineers, accountants, and attorneys. Big businesses hired salesclerks to sell their goods. They hired managers to supervise their workers. These workers had enough money to purchase items that in the past only the elite could afford. The growing middle class supported higher education and the arts.

Review Questions

1. Why did immigrants come to the United States?

2. Name one change that took place in cities in the late nineteenth century.

READING CHECK

Where did most immigrants from Asia enter the United States?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

Find the word *urban* in the underlined sentence. What do you think *urban* means? The word *rural* has the opposite meaning of *urban*. Use this antonym to figure out the meaning of *urban*.

READING SKILL

Understand Effects Describe how tenements developed.
