

MODULE 5: IMMIGRATION

LESSON 1 – The Great Migration

LESSON 2 – Immigration to America

LESSON 3 – Global Jewish Immigration

EQUIPMENT

- [Powerpoint Presentation](#)

Teacher Pack:

- [Teacher guide: Putting it all Together](#)

Student Handouts:

- [Lyrics to “America”](#)- optional handout
- [Primary Source Pack - Immigration to America](#)
– one pack per group

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jewish immigration to America took place in three main waves.

The first wave began when former Portuguese Crypto-Jews (anusim) who had moved to Recife, Brazil, immigrated to New Amsterdam (currently New York) in 1654.

- Recife changed hands between the Portuguese and Dutch twice. While it was under Portuguese control, Jews could not live openly as Jews. After the Dutch conquered Recife, Jews began living open Jewish lives. In 1654, the Portuguese recaptured Recife and expelled the Jews. Most went to Amsterdam, Holland, but a small group travelled to America.
- The first wave of Jews to America consisted mostly of Sephardi Jews.
- Jews settled mainly in New York (then New Amsterdam), Newport, Philadelphia, Charleston and Savannah.

The second wave (1820–1880) consisted primarily of German Jews.

- During this period, 150,000 Jews moved to the United States.
- America was expanding westward and was in need of immigrants to build the infrastructure and to provide services for the growing population.
- German Jews left Germany due to economic hardship, persecution and political oppression.
- Immigrants in the second wave lived in New York but also settled throughout the country in San Francisco, Chicago and small cities and towns in the Midwest, South and West.

The third and largest wave (1880–1924) consisted of over two million immigrants, mostly from Russia, Austria-Hungary and Romania.

(Note – this lesson deals with the period before World War 1, but the wave of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe continued until 1924.)

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- After entering America through Ellis Island, most of the immigrants stayed in New York City, particularly the Lower East Side.
- Immigrants also moved to large cities, primarily on the East Coast such as Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore.
- Difficult economic conditions, persecution, pogroms and the opportunity to live in the “Goldene Medina” where the streets were “paved with gold”, were the reasons that large numbers of Jews immigrated to America.

Each wave encountered its own set of challenges and opportunities.

- The United States of America was the first country established with the principles of the enlightenment, which included the concept of a separation between church and state.
- The immigrants faced the challenges of a new language and culture.
- America offered economic opportunity due to its physical expansion and its lack of established class system.
- Although earlier waves of Jewish immigrants helped the newer immigrants by establishing charitable institutions, tensions existed between them, especially between the second and third wave immigrants. The established and affluent German immigrants of the second wave were often embarrassed by the less worldly, Yiddish-speaking immigrants of the third wave.

The three waves of American immigration are summarised in the chart:

	Years	Push Factors	Pull Factors	Immigrants	Life in America
1st Wave	1654 – 1730	Many Crypto-Jews fleeing Catholic Portuguese rule and persecution	Religious tolerance	Mostly Sephardi	Lived mainly in New York (then New Amsterdam), Philadelphia, Savannah, and Charleston
2nd Wave	1820 – 1880	Economic hardship	US expansion westward Need for immigrants for economic reasons	Mostly German Jews 150,000 Jewish immigrants	Lived in New York and also in San Francisco, Chicago, and towns throughout the Midwest, South, and West
3rd Wave	1880 – 1924	Economic hardship Persecution and pogroms	US viewed as the “Goldene Medina” with religious tolerance and social and economic opportunities	Many from Eastern Europe Over 2 million Jewish immigrants	Most stayed in New York, particularly the Lower East Side, as well as large cities on the East Coast

BIG IDEA

America is currently home to one of the largest Jewish communities in the world. Jews arrived in America in stages, with the largest influx of immigrants arriving between 1880 and 1924. As in other countries,

Jewish immigrants faced many challenges. However, America's unique characteristics of personal freedoms, separation of church and state, and enormous economic opportunity contributed to the building of a thriving Jewish community with its own set of accomplishments and challenges.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will be able to distinguish between the three waves of Jewish immigration to America from 1654 to 1924 and to identify the push and pull factors for each wave.
- Students will be able to make assumptions about Jewish life in America by analysing newspaper articles and advertisements.

KEY WORDS

- Lower East Side
- Forward (Forverts) Yiddish newspaper

1. INTRODUCTION

a) Open the [PowerPoint](#) and click on **slide 2**. Play Neil Diamond's "America" as students are entering the classroom in order to set the mood.

Optional: print the [Lyrics to "America"](#) and have them available for the students to read at their desks while listening to the music.

Depending on time, hold a brief discussion of the song at beginning or end of the lesson or, alternatively, leave the song to speak for itself.

b) Tell the students:

In this lesson we will be learning about Jewish immigration to America.

Between the years 1815 and 1914, approximately 40 million people emigrated from their homes in Europe to other continents with over half moving to America.

Most of the Jewish immigrants, over two million people, moved to America.

c) Click on **slide 3** and show the students a clip from the movie Hester Street.

Before starting to watch the clip explain that Hester Street is a 1975 movie based on the novella Yekl: A Tale of the New York Ghetto, which was written in 1896 by Abraham Cahan.

The movie tells the story of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe to the Lower East Side of New York through the lens of the Bogovnik family.

Previously in the movie, the father, Yankl/Jake, moved to America ahead of his wife and son, and in this clip they reunite.

(Note to the teacher: Although the small clip is appropriate for students of this age, the whole movie may not be appropriate for your students.)

d) Ask students questions about the clip.

They are not expected to know all of the answers but offer pieces of information or hints in order to help draw the answers out. (The answers are in brackets.)

i. Where do you think this scene is taking place?

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(New York, Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty)

ii. When do you think this scene took place? What led you to your answer?

(1896. An exact date is not necessary. Perhaps the students can guess the century.)

iii. Why is the man (Yankl/Jake Bogovnik) coming to Ellis Island?

(To pick up his wife and son. He came to America ahead of his family and then sent for them.)

iv. Compare the clothes of Jake and the woman, Gitl.

(He is dressed in modern clothing and has shaved his beard; she is dressed as a religious woman from the “old country” including wearing a wig which is worn by some religious married women.)

v. Describe the boy, Yossele.

(He has sidelocks (payot), doesn't speak English, and is dressed in Eastern European clothes.)

vi. What language are they speaking?

(Yiddish)

vii. What are some of the challenges that Jake, Gitl, and Yossele might face?

(Learning a new language and culture, making a living, and remaining religious in America.)

e) Tell the students:

Jake, Gitl, and Yossele were in the third wave of Jewish immigrants to America.

In this lesson, we will briefly discuss the first two waves and dig deeper into the reasons that Jews came to America at this time and what they found once they got there.

2. DEVELOPMENT

a) Class activity – The three waves of Jewish immigration to America

i. Click on **slides 4 – 13** and discuss the three waves of Jewish immigration to America.

ii. Emphasise the push and pull factors of Jewish immigration to the United States.

b) Group activity – Analysing newspaper advertisements and articles

i. Divide the class into small groups and give each group the [Primary Source Pack Immigration to America](#)

ii. Each group should divide up the clippings so that each clipping is studied by at least one student. On finishing with a clipping, students should select another.

iii. The students should then fill out the analysis sheet ‘Putting it all Together’ as a group with one student writing and the others contributing answers.

The analysis worksheet gathers information about life in America for the new Jewish immigrants, which will be used to complete the next activity below.

iv. If there is time, run through the answers to the questions on the clippings with the whole class. Suggested answers can be found on [Teacher guide: Putting it all Together](#)

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c) Group activity – Jake, Gitl, and Yossele 30 years later (1926)

(Option – Students present their family updates in the form of skits. The teacher may supply costumes to enhance the skits.)

- i. In the same groups as before, each group writes a paragraph about the Bogovnik family from Hester Street in 1926, 30 years later.

Among other information, they may provide answers to the following questions on **slide 14**:

- What are their names?
- What clothes do they wear?
- Where do they live?
- What jobs do they have?
- How do they practice Judaism?
- What are their hobbies?

- ii. The groups present their updates of the family to the class.

After they have all been presented, students vote for the most likely scenario (they should not vote for their own group).

3. REFLECT AND RESPOND

Throughout their study of Jewish history, the students will have the opportunity to reflect on their journey by writing a short entry in a journal that each student will keep. Depending on school resources and class suitability, teachers should choose if students will write in a notebook or keep an online journal.

Immigrants to America adopted customs from their new country while retaining some aspects of life in the “old country.” Think about changes that might have taken place within your own family. What traditions did your grandparents or great grandparents retain from the “old country” and what did they adopt from the culture of their new country?

If immigration isn't part of your family's story, where do your own family's traditions originate?