THE GROWTH OF CITIES AND AMERICAN CULTURE (1865 TO 1900)

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

EMMA LAZARUS, THE NEW COLOSSUS, 1883
(Inscription on the base of the Statue of Liberty)

In 1893, the city of Chicago hosted the World's Columbian Exposition. Over 12 million people traveled to the White City, as Chicago's fairgrounds and gleaming white buildings were popularly called. They went to see the progress of American civilization by new industrial technologies & architects' visions of an ideal urban environment. Outside the fairgrounds, the real city of Chicago had its own attractions and interest. In little more than 50 years, the population of this Midwestern city had grown to over 1 million people. Its central business district was a marvel of modern urban structures, consisting of steel-framed skyscrapers, department stores, & theatres. Around this central hub lay a sprawling gridiron of workers' housing near the city's factories & warehouses, & a few miles beyond were tree-lined suburban retreats for the wealthier class. The entire urban complex was connected by a network of hundreds of miles of streetcars and railroads.

Visitors to Chicago also experienced a "gray city" of pollution, poverty, crime, and vice. Some complained of the confusion of tongues, for in 1893 Chicago was a city of immigrants. More than 755 of its population were either foreign-born or the children of the foreign-born. Both the real Chicago and the idealized "White City" represented the complex ways in which three great forces of change—industrialization, immigration, and urbanization—were transforming the nature of American society in the late 19th century. During the last week, we studied the impact of industrialization...this week we will look at the related forces of immigration & urbanization

A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS
- In the late 50 years of the 19th century, the U.S. population increased from 23 million in 1850 to 76 million in 1900. A significant portion of the growth was fueled by the arrival in these years of 16 million immigrants. An additional 9 million more immigrants arrived during the peak years of immigration from 1901 to 1910.

GROWTH OF IMMIGRATION
- In every era, motives for emigrating from a country to another are a combination of 'pushes' (negatives factors from which people are fleeing) and 'pulls' (positive attractions of the adopted country)
- The negative forces driving Europeans to emigrate in the late 19th century included the following:
  1. The poverty of displaced farmworkers driven from the land by the mechanization of farmwork
  2. Overcrowding and joblessness in European cities as a result of a population boom
  3. Religious persecution, such as that of the Jews in Russia
- Positive reasons for choosing to emigrate to the United States included the following:
  1. Political and religious freedom
  2. Economic opportunities afforded by the settling of the Great Plains
  3. Abundance of industrial jobs in U.S. cities
  4. Large steamships & the inexpensive one-way passage in the ships' "steerage" made it possible for millions of poor Europeans to emigrate

"OLD IMMIGRANTS & "NEW IMMIGRANTS"
- Through the 1880s, the majority of immigrants came from northern and western Europe: the British Isles, Germany, etc...
- Most of these "old" immigrants were Protestants, although a sizable minority were Irish and German Catholics
- Their language (mostly English-speaking) and high level of literacy and occupational skills made it relatively easy for these immigrants to blend into a mostly rural American society in the early 1800s

NEW IMMIGRANTS
- Beginning in the 1890s & continuing to the outbreak of WWI in 1914, there was a notable change in the national origins of most immigrants
- The "new" immigrants came from southern and eastern Europe: Italians, Greeks, Croats, Slovaks, Poles, and Russians
- Many were poor and illiterate peasants, who had left autocratic countries and therefore were unaccustomed to democratic traditions
- Unlike the earlier groups of Protestant immigrants, the newcomers were largely Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, & Jewish
- On arrival, most new immigrants crowded into poor ethnic neighborhoods in New York, Chicago, and other major U.S. cities
- 25% of the new immigrants were "birds of passage," young men contracted for unskilled factory, mining, and construction jobs, who would return to their native lands once they had saved a fair sum of money to bring back to their families
RESTRICTING IMMIGRATION
- In the 1870s, then a French sculptor began work on the Statue of Liberty, there were few legal restrictions on immigration to the United States
- By 1886, however, (the year that the great welcoming statue was placed on its pedestal in New York harbor)-Congress had passed a number of new laws restricting immigration

1. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, placed a ban on all new immigrants from China
2. One restriction occurred on immigration of "undesirable" persons (those convicted of criminal acts or diagnosed as mentally incompetent)
3. Another law in 1885 prohibited contract labor in order to protect American workers
4. After the opening of Ellis Island as an immigration center in 1892, the new immigrants had to pass more rigorous medical and document examinations and pay an entry tax before being allowed into the United States

WHO SUPPORTED THE RESTRICTION OF IMMIGRANTS
- These efforts to restrict immigration were supported by diverse groups such as:
1. Labor unions, which feared that employers would use immigrants to depress wages and break strikes
2. A nativist society called the American Protective Association, which was openly prejudiced against Roman Catholics
3. Social Darwinists, who viewed the new immigrants as biologically inferior to English and Germanic people
- During a severe depression in the 1890s, foreigners became a convenient scapegoat for jobless workers as well as for employers who blamed strikes & the labor movement on foreign agitators
- By no means, however, did the anti-immigrant feelings and early restrictions stop the flow of newcomers
- By 1900, almost 15% of the U.S. population were immigrants
- The Statue of Liberty remained a beacon of hope for the poor and the oppressed of southern and eastern Europe until the 1920's Quota Act