**United States History**

**Unit 6 Reading: The Immigrant Experience**

**Source A: Lee Chew, *Life of a Chinese Immigrant* (1903)**

I heard about the American foreign devils, that they were false, having made a treaty by which it was agreed that they could freely come to China, and the Chinese as freely go to their country.

The man had gone away from our village a poor boy. **Now he returned with unlimited wealth**, which he had obtained in the country of the American wizards. After many amazing adventures he became a merchant in a city called Mott Street. . . .

 The wealth of this man filled my mind with the idea that I, too, would like to go to the country of wizards and gain some of their wealth. My father game me $100, and I went to Hong Kong with five other boys from our place and we got passage on a steamer.

When I got to San Francisco, which was before the passage of the Exclusion Act, I was half starved, because I was afraid to eat the provisions of the barbarians. The Chinese laundryman does not learn his trade in China, there are no laundries in China. When I went to work for an American family I could not speak a word of English, and I did not know anything about house work. The family was very good to me and paid me $3.50 a week. I saved my money and sent it home to comfort my parents. . . .

Americans are not all bad, nor are they wicked wizards**. Still, they have their faults, and their treatment of us is outrageous. . . .**

**Source B: Louis Adamac, *Laughing in the Jungle* (1932)**

 As a boy of nine…I experienced a thrill every time one of the men of the little community returned from America. In nine cases out of ten, [a village man] left in economic desperation, on money borrowed from some relative in the United States; now there was talk in the village that he was worth anywhere from one to three thousand American dollars.

**My notion of the United States, then, and for a few years after, was that it was a grand, amazing, somewhat fantastic place—the Golden Country—a sort of Paradise—a Land of Promise in more ways than one—huge beyond conception…**

In America one could make pots of money in a short time, acquire immense holdings, wear a white collar, and have polish on one’s boots—and eat white bread, soup, and meat on weekdays as well as on Sundays, even if one were but an ordinary workman to begin with.

Louis Adamac

**In America everything was possible. There even the common people were “citizens,” not “subjects,” as they were in Austria and in most other European countries.** There as a man in Blato, a former steel worker in Pittsburgh, who claimed that upon an occasion he had shaken hands and exchanged words with Theodore Roosevelt, to whom he familiarly referred as “Tedi”—which struck my mother very funny.

**Source C: Ida Lindgren(1871-1874)**

What shall I say? Why has the Lord brought us here? **Oh, I feel so oppressed, so unhappy!** Two whole days it took us to get here and they were not the least trying part of our travels. The closer we came to Lake Sibley the more desolate the country seemed and the roads were altogether frightful, almost trackless. We stayed in Albinson’s attic. The attic is divided into three rooms but with no doors; I have hung up a sheet in front of our “door.” I set a candle on the floor, sat down beside it, took the children in my lap and burst into tears. The Indians are not so far away from here, I can understand, and all the men you see coming by, riding or driving wagons, are armed with revolvers and look like highway robbers….

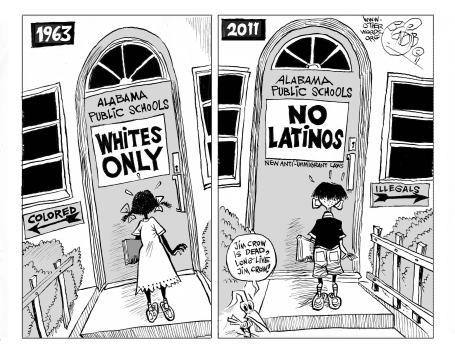
We have not had rain since the beginning of June, and then with this heat and often strong winds as well, you can imagine how everything has dried out. **But then one day there came millions, trillions of grasshoppers in great clouds, hiding the sun, and coming down onto the fields, eating up everything that was still there, the leaves on the trees, peaches, grapes, cucumbers, onions, cabbage, everything, everything**. They are not the kind of grasshoppers we see in Sweden but are large, grayish ones. As burdened as I feel, my heart is still not weighed down, it still rises up from time to time.

**Source D: Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (1912)**

In America, then, everything was free, as we had heard in Russia; the streets were as bright as a synagogue on a holy day. Education was free**. That subject my father had written about repeatedly, as comprising his chief hope for us children, the essence of American opportunity, the treasure that no thief could touch, nor even misfortune or poverty.**

On our second day I was thrilled with the realization of what this freedom of education meant. A little girl from across the alley came and offered to conduct us to school. This child, who had never seen us till yesterday, who could not pronounce our names, who was not much better dressed than we, was able to offer us the freedom of the schools of Boston! No application made, no questions asked, no examinations, rulings, exclusions; no machinations, no fees. The doors stood open for every one of us. The smallest child could show us the way.

**Source E: Israel Kasovich, *The Days of our Years* (1880s)**

 My younger brother stripped tobacco leaves for three dollars a week; he would come home from work all wan and waxen, and keep on vomiting. My older brother was employed at turning a heavy wheel; he would return home all dirty like a chimney sweep and too weak to eat. I scanned the newspapers to find out where “hands” were wanted. I ran all over the city, but could find no work, employers rejecting me on account of my delicate hands. My neighbors advised me to become a peddler. I had come to America to be a tiller of the soil, and now I was to become a peddler! **A wholesaler told me that all the Jewish millionaires here had started out as peddlers, that being the best way to become Americanized and to work one’s self up. How cheap everything was!** Whoever heard in Russia of a pair of scissors selling for ten cents, or of a pair of women’s stockings, ditto?

A Modern Anti-Immigrant Cartoon, 2011

My portable shop was pulling me to the ground, and it seemed as if my shoulder blade would break any minute. A gang of street urchins pelted me with lumps of stone and coal. I returned home with shooting pains in my side and a swollen shoulder. I had sold only ten cents worth of goods.

**There was no evidence of love for us here; we were stoned in the streets, and many refused to rent their houses to Jews.** Again, it was impossible to observe the Jewish religion here, many being compelled to work on the Jewish Sabbath and holidays. Where, then, was the freedom, where the human equality?

**Source F: Joseph Baccardo (1898)**

My father came back [to Italy] to bring us to this country. We all came the cheapest way. By then I was nine or ten years old. First, my brother and I slept on the floor. We slept in the kitchen and mother and father in the other room. That’s all we had for about ten years.

**[](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e6/ItalianPopulationMascott1888.jpg)I hear people talk about the good old days. Well, look how many people suffered. All those bridges, all those roads, all those railroads—they were all built by people who worked hard to build them.** My father had to work his heart out to get anywhere. And yet, no matter how hard he worked, there was never enough money.

Later on I went to the public school. They put me in the first grade, and I was ten or eleven. **They kept advancing me from grade to grade every year, but I wasn’t learning anything.** I just wasn’t picking the language up. Finally, when I was in the fourth grade, I quit school altogether.

How to deal with Italian Immigrants, 1888