**European Emigration to the USA:** teaching and learning ideas and activities to support the use of the Historiana narrative ‘European Emigration to the USA’

**What is this document?**

This document accompanies the Historiana narrative ‘[European Emigration to the USA’](https://historiana.eu/narratives/cfgtrh6b/start) and is designed for teachers. It provides ideas and activities to help teachers to use the narrative in their classrooms with students. All the ideas and activities assume that students will be working offline with pen, paper and books. It is assumed that teachers may be doing the same, or that they may have access to a projector screen.

**But my students have access to digital resources?**

Great news! If you are all able to work online, then please go to the Teaching and Learning section of Historiana. If you search for “European Emigration to the USA” you will find e-learning activities designed to help students work with each section of the narrative. These activities could be done in school, or as a home working task. For further guidance on how to work with Historiana e-learning activities with our class, please go to this link that explains how to share [go to this link.](https://blog.historiana.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Sharing-activities.mp4)

**What are the practical matters I need to consider?**

*Students:* as a general guide, this is content and material that is likely to be taught to students in their middle teens. There are a variety of ways to make the challenge of the text easier or harder. The narrative is in English, but it could be translated beforehand. It could be read by students, or it could be read to them via a pre-recording, or by the teachers. Students could work in mixed-attainment pairs or on their own. The teaching ideas and student activities are focused on supported the students’ historical understanding of what they are reading.

*Resources:* the narrative online, or a printout of the narrative, or an adaptation of the narrative (such as a recording) will be needed for each activity. Specific additional resources are indicated at the top of each separate section. They are collated together in the ‘Resources PowerPoint’

*Time:* the time required to use this narrative is very adaptable. If the focus is mainly on reading and discussion, then it would be possible to give an overview of the topic in one lesson. If all the activity ideas are followed then it would require more like six lessons. It is possible to use parts of the narrative with the accompanying activities in order to fit into (or to complement) other topics being taught. As the teacher you will know how much time you have and will be able to use the narrative and this guide to plan the work for your students.

**What does the rest of this document contain?**

The rest of this document is organised as per the sections of the narrative. There are teaching and learning ideas for each section. Any resources required in addition to the narrative itself are listed at the top of each section. Each section has a ‘key takeaways’ section for students. That is, what students should learn after working with each section.

**European Emigration to the USA: Introduction**

*Resources for this section:*

* Copies of ‘Pie Chart 1850’ for each student – see ‘Resources PowerPoint’.

*Key takeaways:*

* First-generation immigration to the USA in 1850 (where birthplace is known) was overwhelmingly from northern and north-western Europe.
* Irish people were the largest first-generation national group of migrants in 1850.
* The birthplace of enslaved people was not recorded.
* By the later 19th and early 20th centuries, most first-generation European migrants to the USA were from the southern and eastern parts of the continent.

*Activity:*

* Ask students to read/listen to the introduction.
* Give each student a copy of the ‘Pie Chart 1850’. Students annotate the segment of the pie chart that represents: 1) The Irish born people in the USA in 1850. (Irish), 2) The people born in Great Britain who lived in the USA in 1850. (British), 3) The non-European foreign-born people in the USA in 1850. (Not from Europe). (Teacher crib: Orange segment = Irish born people. Grey segment = people born in Great Britain. Mid blue = migrants to the US who were not from Europe.)
* Short teacher-led discussion on the question: ‘How would you describe migration to the USA in a few sentences to someone who had not read the introduction?’
* Ask students to re-read the introduction, focusing on the period post 1850.
* Short teacher-led discussion, or students write a paragraph on the questions: ‘How had the pattern of migration to the USA changed by 1920? In what ways was the pattern of migration similar to 1850?’

**European Emigration to the USA: The Reasons for Emigration 1845-1945**

*Resources for this section:*

* Copies of the ‘Push and pull factor images’ between pairs/small groups – see ‘Resources PowerPoint’ (there are 5 slides)

*Key takeaways:*

* There were a variety of reasons for migration to the USA from Europe in the period.
* These can be categorised into ‘push factors’ and ‘pull factors’.
* The influence of these factors was felt differently at different times and in different places across the continent of Europe.

*Activity:*

* Ask students to read/listen to the section ‘The Reasons for Emigration 1845-1945’.
* Teacher introduction to the activity: “Today we are very familiar with people wanting to move to Europe from other parts of the world in search of a better life. But millions of Europeans were leaving Europe to find a better life in the last half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. We are going to identify ‘push factors’ that drove people away from Europe and ‘pull factors’ that attracted Europeans to go to the USA.”
* Give students the ‘Push and Pull factor images’ between pairs/small groups. Ask students to use their reading to help them sort the images into two columns of PUSH and PULL factors.
* Teacher led class discussion about the question: ‘Why did Europeans migrate to the USA 1845-1945?’ Encourage students to use evidence from the reading and the activity in order to explore how the push factors affected people differently in different parts of Europe and different times. You might discuss when ‘pull factors’ were likely to have become particularly attractive to people. Encourage students to keep in mind the number and range of Europeans affected.

**European Emigration to the USA: the Voyage to a New Life in America**

*Resources for this section:*

* Copy of Map of Europe in c.1920 for each students – see ‘Resources PowerPoint’
* Electronic devices to enable a search for places OR a modern map – not provided

*Key takeaways:*

* People travelled from across the continent of Europe to large ports, such as Liverpool and Hamburg, from where they embarked for the sea voyage to the USA.
* There were similarities and differences in the experience of travel, the cost, the accommodation and the level of hardship and difficulty people had to endure. In all cases the journey to the USA was more arduous and drawn out than it would be for most people today.

*Activity:*

* Ask students to read/listen to this section focusing just on locations. When they find a placename they should mark on their own copy of the Map of Europe c1920 if it was a large port for sailing to the USA, or a smaller departure point within Europe to get to one of the larger ports. Agree a key for this. (For example, a red cross could be for major ports and a blue cross for smaller places.) If students do not know where places are, then they can either look them up on a device, or use a modern map provided by you, the teacher.
* Ask students to read/listen to the section again in order to put together a short leaflet guide (or notes for a leaflet guide) for someone planning to travel to the USA at this time. This should be short and practical, designed to offer support and knowledge for people planning to travel. The following questions can be given to students to prompt them to write a useful guide:
  + How should people expect to travel?
  + How long should they expect the journey to be?
  + Where should they expect to stay?
  + How much money should they plan to take with them?
  + What hardships/difficulties should they anticipate?
* Students could learn more about the Holocaust related story of the SS St Louis (at the end of this section) by going to the website of the United States Holocaust Museum and searching for “St. Louis”.

## **European Emigration to the USA: European Emigrants become American Immigrants**

*Resources for this section:*

* A copy of the storyboard for each student – see resources PowerPoint.

*Key takeaways:*

* Most people arrived in New York. The way they entered the USA changed over time.

*Activity:*

* Give each student a copy of the storyboard. Ask them to read the 4th section of the narrative "European Emigration to the USA". Students should use their learning from this reading to write the historical context for each image.

## **European Emigration to the USA: Portraits of the New Arrivals to America**

*Resources for this section:*

* There are no additional resources beyond the section of the narrative.

*Key takeaways:*

* People from many different parts of Europe and with different backgrounds migrated to the USA. The images of them suggest they were hopeful, proud and perhaps somewhat nervous about their move.

*Activity:*

* Ask students to look carefully at the photos and the labels that accompany them. Then have a short class discussion about how they can be used as evidence for the variety of people who migrated to the USA from Europe at this time and also what they reveal about people’s feelings and hopes.

**European Emigration: The New Americans: where they went, what they did, and how they were treated**

*Resources for this section:*

* Map of the USA, 1876

*Key takeaways:*

* People settled in groups in different parts of the USA. Some of the impact of this settlement is still evident in modern times.
* There was some hostility to later migrants to the USA. The political party that represented this hostility did not thrive, possibly because there were so many opportunities in the USA and because when it was decided that there was little ‘empty’\* land left then immigration was tightened to the USA. (\*Please note, the word ‘empty’ is in ‘...’ because this only expresses the view of migrants and many politicians at the time. The land was not empty and native Americans had long lived there. Their rights and history were not recognised at the time by the vast majority of people.)
* The migrants to the USA made new lives in a variety of ways and the USA became a vibrant and dynamic society.

*Activity:*

* Ask students to read this section of the narrative. Project a copy of the map of the USA 1876 and give each student a copy of the outline map of the USA. Students annotate their copy of the map to show where different groups of people settled and the sorts of activities they engaged in. You might agree on a key for this with students, or ask them to develop their own key.
* Ask students to compare their completed map to the map from the US Census 2004 that they can find within the narrative chapter. What similarities and differences do they observe?
* Ask students to read the section: ‘How did the US population perceive European immigrants?’ Discuss the similarities and differences with anti-immigration politics parties in your own country today. Older students may be able to hypothesise as to why the American Party declined in the USA.
* Finally, ask students to view the gallery called ‘The New Americans’ in this section of the narrative. (There are accompanying labels.) Discuss together how best to describe the USA based on the evidence of these images.

**Plenary activity**

A plenary (closing activity) could draw all this learning together and enable students to reflect on the big story that emerges from this narrative. You could ask students to select 5-10 images from the narrative and to arrange them as a gallery under the title: ‘European Emigration to the USA, 1845-1945.

Ask them to imagine walking into a gallery space. They would expect to find a title for the space, a big panel of information to introduce the topic and explain the meaning that we make of it from the evidence. Then for each object or image in the gallery they could expect a small panel that explains what the image is about and what it means. Once your students know how to set up a gallery space…

Ask students to write a short museum panel description to be put by each image. This should be a short piece of text that explains what the image reveals, its historical context, and what bigger meaning the image offers as part of the whole gallery. Then ask them to write the bigger panel of information for the entrance to the gallery space.

Finally, ask students to step back from this work and to explain what decisions they made and why in relation to:

* Their choice of images.
* The contents of the accompanying text.
* The text on the big panel.

You could also ask students to review the work of another group of students and to ask them questions about their decision-making processes. Even within the same class there will be different perspectives on how the story of European Migration to the USA 1845-1945 should be told. This itself is interesting and should be brought to the attention of students.