Theme: Approaches to History | Learning Block 1-1: The Rights of Immigrants

Over the centuries, millions of immigrants have journeyed to America. Most sought to fit into American society, yet most also sought to hold onto certain aspects of their native lands. The experience of different immigrant groups illustrates the difficulty of "fitting in" and attaining the full range of rights that the Constitution guarantees to all citizens, when one is perceived as somehow *different* from native-born Americans.

In this theme, we will look at the experiences of two different immigrant groups—the Irish and the Québécois, French-speaking immigrants from Quebec—who came to America in large numbers during the 19th century. Looking at the experiences of these two groups will help us learn how to begin to think like historians: to assess the historical significance of events, to place them in context, and to understand the different perspectives, or **lenses**, through which we can view these events. You will begin developing the **historical thinking** skills necessary to ask questions, investigate sources, and begin outlining your historical analysis essay, using these two immigrant groups as backdrops.

### **The Rights of Immigrants**

The United States, as the saying goes, is a nation of immigrants. In 2014, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, 13.3 percent of all Americans were foreign-born (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014), while everyone else—including Native Americans—was descended from someone who, however long ago, came here from somewhere else.

That simple fact defines America as something different from most other countries: a place whose national identity is not rooted solely in geography or ethnicity but which comprises such shared values as democracy, liberty, opportunity, and upward mobility.

But it is also a fact that America, as a nation, has not always embraced newcomers to its shores. For many immigrant groups, the path to acceptance—and the ability to exercise the full panoply of rights enjoyed by native-born Americans—has been a tortuous one.

There is a strong strain of **nativism** that runs through American culture and society. Especially in times of economic hardship, immigrants have been demonized for "taking American jobs"; at other times they have been victims of religious or racial/ethnic discrimination. The struggle of different immigrant groups to overcome these obstacles, and to be incorporated fully into American society and economic life, is a crucial element of the American story. (Schrag, 2010)

Immigrants came here from many countries, and they entered the country through many different ports. Perhaps the most famous gateway was Ellis Island in New York Harbor—the first federal immigration station, through which 12 million immigrants passed. Today, Ellis Island, as part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument, stands as a symbol of the American immigrant experience.

### **Assimilation**

The process by which immigrant communities, over time, integrate themselves into their host society is known as **assimilation**. In America, this process generally involves the gradual adoption of the English language, along with American culture and values, by the immigrant group. Full assimilation is said to occur when members of a particular group are indistinguishable from the rest of American society. (Brown and Bean, 2006)

Throughout American history, assimilation has generally been assumed to be the logical and desired end result for any immigrant group coming to America. This assumption is not universally shared, however, and some immigrant groups have resisted assimilation by holding on to their native language, food, and cultural practices. Other immigrants saw themselves as "birds of passage," coming to America to take advantage of the greater economic opportunities here but returning home after they'd earned enough money to live comfortably in their native lands.

Sociologists measure assimilation by the extent to which members of an immigrant group:

* Improve their socioeconomic status, making it comparable to national norms;
* Increase geographic mobility, moving beyond the **ethnic enclaves** in which many immigrants first settle;
* Adopt English as a second and, eventually, first language; and
* Intermarry—that is, marry people from outside their ethnic group or community. (Waters and Jiménez, 2005)

#### Barriers to Assimilation

The classic theory of assimilation holds that immigrants inevitably become more "Americanized" with the passage of time. But there are many barriers to assimilation that can delay or even prevent a group's full assimilation. (Brown and Bean, 2006)

Language is one of the primary barriers to assimilation. Immigrant groups whose members speak English may find it easier to assimilate than members of other groups, though this is not always the case.

Race may also block a group's assimilation into American society. The nation's tragic history of racial division has had a long-lasting impact on American society; the simple fact is that having a darker skin color undeniably marks a person as different from the majority of white Americans. For that reason alone, an English-speaking immigrant from Nigeria, for example, might find it harder to "blend in" than an English-speaking immigrant from Scotland.

Finally, religion has historically been a major barrier to assimilation. From the earliest colonial days, religious minorities have often faced prejudice and discrimination in America. From the anti-Catholic riots of the 19th century to the widespread anti-Semitism of the 20th century to the anti-Muslim sentiment of the post-9/11 era, religious prejudices have proven to be a powerful impediment to assimilation.

### **Thinking Like a Historian**

For too many people, history is an unconnected list of names and dates—a litany of people and events that needs to be memorized but not necessarily understood.

Needless to say, that's not the way historians think about history. They know that history, in the most fundamental sense, is a story: a complex narrative with lots of moving, interdependent parts, all of which inform and instruct us about the past. And **historical thinking** is a way to think about the world that helps us understand not only the past, but the present. (Wineburg, 2010)

The first step toward thinking like a historian is to understand that there is no single, "right" way to look at history. Studying history is all about **interpretation**—how we try to make sense of events and individuals from the past. Different historians may have different interpretations of the same event, but neither one is necessarily right or wrong. What matters is how well each interpretation meshes with the **historical evidence**. (Cohen, 2011)

There are many different kinds of historical evidence: documents, artifacts, buildings, paintings or photographs, and oral histories, to name just a few. But it's also important to realize the many things that are not historical evidence: opinion, rumor, propaganda, and political rhetoric, among many others.

#### Example: Thinking Historically by Examining the Impact of Irish Immigration

The Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s led to an enormous movement of Irish immigrants to the United States. But what were the most important effects of this historical event?

One historian might argue that the vast influx of Irish immigrants was good for the American economy because it contributed to the rapid industrialization of the American North, providing a large pool of cheap factory labor in the major coastal cities where most of the immigrant Irish settled. Another historian might argue that Irish immigration, regardless of its effects on industrialization, had a destabilizing effect on American society because it led to urban overcrowding, public health problems caused by slum-like conditions, and social conflict arising from religious differences.

Neither interpretation is necessarily right or wrong. And it's entirely possible that both could be justified by the historical evidence, which in this case would include the number of industrial jobs created in Northern cities in the 1840s and 1850s; statistics on housing and infectious diseases; and contemporary accounts of anti-Catholic discrimination and violence.

### **Historical Lenses**

Different historians can develop different interpretations of the same event because they are looking at that event from different perspectives and emphasizing some pieces of historical evidence more than others.

The different perspectives from which historians approach the task of historical research are known as **historical lenses**. More generally, the study of historical methods, and of the techniques for researching and writing history, is known as **historiography**.

Historical lenses are often referred to as categories of history or approaches to history. Click on the tabs to learn more about each type of historical lens. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the way historians examine different aspects of history, however. (Endy, 2015) As you begin to think about what topic you would like to explore further for your historical analysis essay, you will want to consider through which historical lens (or lenses) you will examine the different aspects of the event.

**Political history**

**Social history**

**Military history**

**Economic history**

**Religious history**

**Cultural history**

**History of science**

These are only a few examples. Historical lenses can also represent certain **theories of history**, such as the Great Man Theory, which holds that history can be explained mainly by studying the actions and motivations of highly influential leaders or heroes, or Marxism, which argues that social class conflict and related economic forces determine historical outcomes. (Tosh, 1984)

Theories of history are sometimes referred to as schools of historiography. Some other notable schools of historiography include the Annales School, a theory of French history that emphasizes long-term social history and the use of social science methodology; psychohistory, which studies the psychological motivations behind historical events; and the cyclical theory of history, which holds that history can be defined in terms of repeating cycles of events.

Looking once more at the two different interpretations of Irish immigration to the U.S., it's clear that the first historian looked at the issue through the lens of economic history, while the second used the lens of social history.

Other lenses offer the possibility of still more interpretations: a political historian, for instance, might focus on the role that Irish immigration played in building the Democratic political machines in such cities as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. A religious historian, on the other hand, might study the influence of Irish Catholic immigrants on the rise of America's major Catholic universities, including Georgetown, Fordham, and the University of Notre Dame.

The point is that whatever approach you take to history—whatever lens you apply to any historical event—your choice will affect what you see and the conclusions that you draw from the historical evidence.

### **Asking a Research Question**

Once you have chosen a basic topic for your historical analysis, you will need to ask a question about what it is you want to research. A **research question** is more than an opinion—as the name implies, it requires a certain amount of research to answer.



Immigrants arriving in the United States. (Click button for citation) [](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Health_Inspection_of_Immigrants_in_the_19th_Century_(7844851684).jpg)

##### ***How to ask a good question:***

1. **Conduct preliminary research:** You need to have a certain basis of knowledge about a historical topic before you ask a question about it. And a good way to frame your research question is to draw from facts about the historical event and base your question on historical premises and things you already know about the event. From there, you can prove the premises in your analysis—or attempt to disprove them.

Your first stop as you conduct your preliminary research should be [Shapiro Library](https://lgapi.libapps.com/widgets.php?site_id=75&widget_type=9&output_format=1&widget_embed_type=2&guide_id=183523&page_id=1209807&config_id=1432843082767). A good place to conduct initial research to choose a topic you are interested in, or to narrow down a topic you have in mind, is with an encyclopedia. Through the Shapiro Library, you have access to the Credo Reference encyclopedia, which you can access [at this link](http://search.credoreference.com/content/title/rcah). You will need to log in with your SNHU credentials to access these sites. This is a great way to get started with your research, but Credo should ***not*** constitute your entire research for your essay.

1. **Explore the historical premise and make it explicit:** When asking a research question, don't assume the audience will take the next logical leap with you. State any assumptions that you might be including in your research.

1. **Break it down into further questions:** Yes, you are asking a research question, but it will consist of many questions that add to your argument.

#### Example of Forming a Research Question

Consider the following research question:

Did Irish immigration in the 1840s have a positive impact on the U.S. economy?

This question is flawed in many different ways. To begin, it is overly broad: researching the impact of Irish immigration on the entire U.S. economy could take years. A somewhat better question might be:

Did Irish immigration in the 1840s have a positive impact on the economy of New York City?

That narrows things down a bit, but it's still too vague. What does it mean to have a positive impact on the economy? Let's be more specific:

Did Irish immigration in the 1840s contribute to the growth of manufacturing industries in New York City?

We're getting there, but there are still a few problems. For starters, we're making an assumption about the link between immigration and manufacturing; let's state that assumption, or historical premise, explicitly:

Did the availability of cheap labor, brought about by Irish immigration in the 1840s, contribute to the growth of manufacturing industries in New York City?

A good research question also requires analyzing texts and thinking critically. Your question should have more than a simple "yes" or "no" answer. If your question can only be answered by a series of facts, then it is not critical enough.

**Critical questions:**

* Lead to more questions
* Require further analysis of text
* Provoke further discussion
* Moves you outside of your own frame of reference in order to understand issues on a larger scale
* Focus on the audience and the message (which you will learn more about later in this course)

The research question we developed above is still one that requires a simple, yes-or-no answer. We need a question that requires critical thinking—a question that can't be answered simply:

How did the availability of cheap labor, brought about by Irish immigration in the 1840s, affect the growth of manufacturing industries in New York City?

This question leads to further questions, such as:

What industries might have benefited from the low-skilled Irish immigrant labor pool? How did employers' desire for cheap labor play off against prevailing anti-Catholic, anti-Irish attitudes?

### **Framing Research Questions**



By now, you should have a general idea of what topic you would like to research. The next step will be to formulate a research question about your topic. Below are two sample topics. You will begin the process of conducting an historical event analysis by considering research questions for the sample topics below.

As you work on this exercise, keep in mind the aspects of a successful research question:

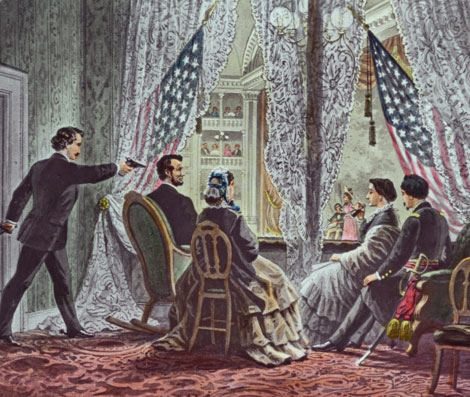
* It leads to more questions.
* It requires further analysis of text.
* It provokes further discussion.
* It moves you outside of your own frame of reference in order to understand issues on a larger scale.
* It focuses on the audience and the message (which you will learn more about later in this course).

Read the summary of each sample topic carefully and consider what you would like to learn more about if you were going to write a paper on that topic. Some sources are provided for you to explore further, which should help in crafting your research questions.

Select a list item tab, press enter, then search down for text. When you hear End of tab content, go back to the next list item to access the next list item tab.

* Sample Topic #1: The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

On April 14, 1865, five days after the Confederate surrender at Appomattox effectively ended the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln was fatally shot as he and his wife were watching a play at Ford's Theatre in Washington, DC.



Depiction of John Wilkes Booth leaning forward to shoot President Abraham Lincoln as he watches Our American Cousin at Ford's Theater in Washington, D.C. (Click button for citation) [](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lincoln_assassination_slide_c1900.png)

Lincoln's assassin was John Wilkes Booth, a well-known actor and Confederate sympathizer. Booth headed a conspiracy that aimed to decapitate the Union government; Vice President Andrew Johnson and Secretary of State William Seward, the next two figures in the line of Presidential succession, were also marked for death that night, but both survived.

Lincoln's death had profound implications for post-Civil War America. In elevating to the Presidency Andrew Johnson, a poorly educated Southern populist Democrat who clashed repeatedly with Congressional Republicans over the course of Reconstruction, it set the stage for another century of political and legal conflicts over the civil rights of African Americans.

The following sources will give you some background on Lincoln's assassination and its aftermath. Read them over—along with any other articles on this subject that you might like to consult—and then formulate research questions that would be appropriate for an analysis of some aspect of this historical event:

* A reprint of an article that first appeared in The Atlantic Monthly in July 1865, which suggested that Lincoln's assassination may have been ordered by the leaders of the Confederacy, can be found [at this link.](http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.snhu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=prf&AN=69689762&site=prc-live)
* An article in Smithsonian magazine, which summarizes the reactions to Lincoln's death as presented in newspapers of the day, can be found [at this link.](http://ezproxy.snhu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=101141982&site=ehost-live&scope=site)
* An article in OAH Magazine of History, which analyzes the Reconstruction of the former Confederacy during the administrations of President Andrew Johnson and Ulysses S. Grant, can be found [at this link.](http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.snhu.edu/stable/25162637?&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

Sample Topic #2: The Passage of Title IX

On June 23, 1972, President Richard M. Nixon signed into law a bill called the Education Amendments of 1972. One little-noticed section of that bill—called, in accordance with standard legislative terminology, Title IX (Nine)—addressed the issue of gender discrimination in higher education:



Senator Birch Bayh exercises with Title IX athletes at Purdue University. (Click button for citation) [](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BirchWorkout.jpg)

"No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Although hardly anyone foresaw it at the time, those 37 words would trigger a revolution in women's athletics. The principal intent of Title IX's sponsors was to prohibit sex discrimination in programs and activities at any college or university that received federal funds, but the law's long-term effect has been to foster the explosive growth of women's sports.

Back in 1972, only about 300,000 girls played high-school and college sports; in 2010, more than three million did. The clear reason: Title IX and the dramatic expansion of college-level athletic opportunities that it brought about.

The law has created its share of controversy. Critics claim that, by requiring a proportional increase in the number of women's sports programs, the law has forced some schools to compensate by eliminating non-revenue producing men's programs, such as wrestling and swimming. Others argue that, as women's sports have "gone big time," more coaching positions have gone to men rather than to women.

What cannot be argued is that Title IX radically changed the nature of women's athletics in America. The following sources will give you some background on Title IX; read them over (along with any other articles on this subject that you might like to consult) and then formulate research questions that would be appropriate for an analysis of some aspect of this topic:

* Two articles about the passage and impact of Title IX, which appeared in the American Association of University Women's *Outlook* magazine, can be found [at this link](http://www.aauw.org/2014/11/24/title-ix-patsy-mink/) and [at this link.](http://www.aauw.org/2015/09/01/title-ix-womens-athletics)
* An interactive timeline by *The New York Times*, which charts the growth of women's sports in America, can be found [at this link.](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2012/06/17/opinion/sunday/sundayreview-titleix-timeline.html#/#time12_269thletics)
* An article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, which argues that Title IX had unintended negative consequences for women's athletics, can be found [at this link.](http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/02/how-title-ix-hurts-female-athletes/253525/)

### **Coming to America: The Irish**



Most of the Irish who journeyed to America during the colonial era were Protestants from Ulster, the province (now known as Northern Ireland) that has remained a part of the United Kingdom. These Scots-Irish immigrants differed in many respects from immigrants from the other Irish provinces, who were mainly Catholic.

[](https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/irish2.html)

Click the image above to visit the Library of Congress page about Irish immigration. (Click button for citation) [](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Irish_immigrants_1909.jpg)

Scots-Irish immigrants in the 18th century were much like other British colonists: they were not well-to-do, but most were skilled and fairly well-educated, and of course, they were Protestant. For that reason, they had little difficulty assimilating into American society.

Philadelphia was the major port of entry for the Scots-Irish, but many eventually settled in the western territories as frontiersmen. (McCaffrey, 2004) President Andrew Jackson was the child of Scots-Irish immigrants, and many later Presidents claimed Scots-Irish ancestry.

Starting around 1820, however, the nature of Irish immigration to America changed dramatically, as unprecedented numbers of Catholics from rural Ireland began to make their way across the Atlantic. This video tells their story:

Up next is a media element.

Buttons for playback, volume control, and playback speed are provided following this message because some screen readers will not respect these controls within the player.

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**Note for keyboard users:** With focus on the following media element, press space bar or enter key to play or pause. Left and right arrow keys advance through the media, while up and down adjust the volume. Press "c" to toggle captions or "f" to toggle full-screen mode.

You are past the player controls.

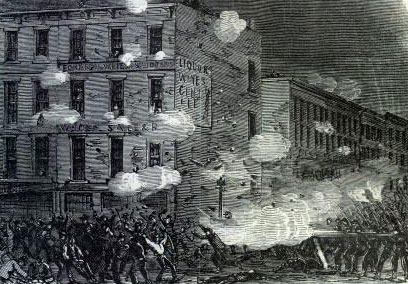
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[View the Transcript](https://snhu.mindedgeonline.com/get.php/)

#### The Irish and the Civil War

Much of the anti-Catholic bias that confronted Irish-American immigrants focused on the figure of the Pope. To many nativist Americans, the idea that Catholic immigrants professed allegiance to a foreign-born religious leader raised serious doubts about whether they could ever be "truly" American. The advent of the War Between the States created an opportunity for the Irish immigrant community to "prove" its Americanism—to demonstrate loyalty to its adopted country, and by so doing, put the lie to the assertions of Know-Nothings and other nativists, who saw the Irish as unfit to be called American.

Most Irish Catholics had settled in the industrial North, and many were quick to express their support for the Union cause. Barely a week after the attack on Fort Sumter that sparked the hostilities, thousands of Irish Americans gathered at a rally in New York's Union Square, cheering on Major Robert Anderson and other Union defenders of Sumter. Urged on by Catholic bishops such as New York's John Hughes and Boston's John Fitzpatrick, thousands of Irish enlisted in the Union Army. (Samito, 2011)



Depiction of the aftermath of the New York Draft Riots. (Click button for citation) [](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:New_York_Draft_Riots_-_Harpers_-_clash.jpg)

Many of these enlistees joined all-Irish "heritage units" led by Irish-American officers. The Army's "Irish Brigade" included New York's Famous "Fighting 69th" Regiment, which distinguished itself during the Seven Days Battles, and the Massachusetts Ninth Volunteers, which fought at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. The well-publicized heroics of these and other all-Irish units helped establish the "Americanism" of the Irish-American community and contributed significantly to the process of Irish assimilation. (Samito, 2011) Some Irish-American soldiers segued naturally into politics after the war; Brigadier General Thomas Francis Meagher, commander of the Irish Brigade, was later governor of the Montana Territory.

But even as the Irish were fighting to preserve the Union, many balked at the goal of abolishing slavery. Since first arriving in America in great numbers, Irish immigrants had frequently found themselves competing economically with free African Americans. Tensions between the two communities, both struggling on the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, had flared into violence on several occasions before the war, including the Cincinnati riots of 1829 and 1841. (Osofsky, 1975)

##### ***The New York Draft Riots***

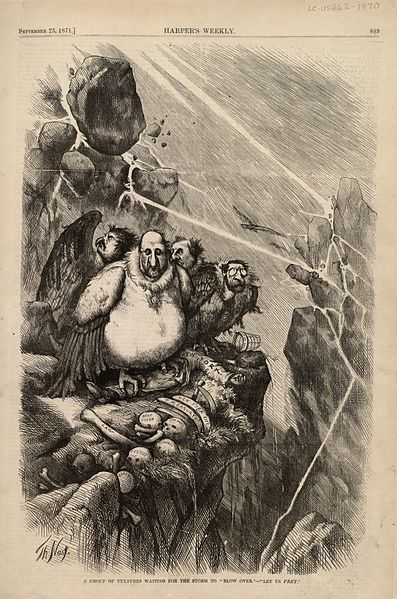
In 1863, economic tensions were exacerbated by the fear, common among Irish immigrants and other working-class whites, that President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation would lead many freed African Americans to move to the North and compete with them for jobs. At the same time, resentment over the newly instituted military draft—from which African Americans were exempt, and which wealthy whites could avoid by paying a $300 fee—festered among the Irish working class.

The drawing of draft numbers was scheduled to take place in New York City in July. On July 13—less than two weeks after the Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg—rioters attacked the building where the drawing was taking place. Police were unable to restore order, and what began as a protest against the draft quickly turned into a four-day race riot. Federal troops, coupled with the state militia, eventually quelled the mob, but the "Draft Riots" left an estimated 120 people dead and another 2,000 injured.

Even as the Civil War provided the Irish-American community with an avenue toward assimilation, the Draft Riots and their aftermath led to lingering tension and distrust between the Irish and African American communities. (Hauptman, 2003)

##### ***Political Mobilization***

Even before the Civil War, Irish Catholics sought to protect their community and assert their strength by organizing politically. Most Irish identified with the Democratic Party, and their growing numbers allowed Democratic **political machines** to dominate many major cities, including New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco, in the late 1800s. Irish-American political bosses retained power in many cities through the Great Depression of the 1930s, and in some cases, well beyond that.



New York's "Boss" Tweed was depicted as a vulture in this cartoon by Thomas Nast. (Click button for citation) [](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nast-Prey-Harper's-Weekly-1871.jpg)

These local political machines provided many valuable social services at a time when state and local governments did not. They helped immigrants—originally mostly Irish, but as time passed, newcomers from many other lands as well—become citizens and find jobs, and they would often help out with money or food in times of need.

But many of the political machines of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were notorious—and rightly so—as hotbeds of graft and corruption. In New York City, the Democratic machine led by Boss William M. Tweed embezzled between $40 million and $100 million in just five years, and similar (though smaller-scale) corruption flourished in many other cities.

The emergence of government-provided social services, beginning in the Great Depression, displaced the local machines and helped contribute to their eventual demise. Still, the big-city political machines of the late 19th and early 20th centuries unquestionably eased the burdens for millions of immigrants and helped them find their place in American society.

##### ***Assimilation***

With the passage of time, the Irish have assimilated fully into American society and culture. While the Irish immigrants of the 19th century were poor and ill-educated, today's Irish Americans as a group rank well above the national averages for household income and educational attainment. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014)

### **Exercise: Further Readings**



As you begin research for your historical analysis essay, you will encounter secondary sources, such as scholarly journals and periodicals. The following passage is from a scholarly journal article that looks at possible job discrimination against the Irish in Major League Baseball during the 1880s. Read the passage and then answer the question following it, keeping in mind the historical concept of **change** over time.

The passage below is excerpted from ["Anti-Irish Job Discrimination circa 1880: Evidence from Major League Baseball"](http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.snhu.edu/stable/pdf/40927624.pdf), pages 409 to 410 and 415 to 416. Click on the title of the article to read, download, and print a copy of the text. These readings are provided by the Shapiro Library. This reading is required. You will have to log into Shapiro Library with your SNHU credentials to access this article.

**The Famine Irish**

From about 1846 to the early 1850s Ireland was beset by a series of disastrous failures of the potato crop, a staple for poor peasants in the rural western and southern counties. One outcome was an estimated 1.1 to 1.5 million deaths from starvation and related diseases, roughly 15 percent of the country's pre- famine population (Kenny 2000: 89). Another was a mass exodus, primarily to the United States. About 1.5 million Irish entered the United States from 1846 to 1855, by far the largest immigrant wave up to that time. This was 45.6 percent of total U.S. immigration in the 1840s and 35.2 percent in the 1850s (ibid.: 90). The wave subsided after the mid-1850s (Hatton and Williamson 1993: 596).

The famine immigrants tended to settle in large northeastern cities, often the ports where their transporting ships landed. In 1850, 37 percent of the U.S. Irish-born population lived in cities of 25,000 or more, compared to just under 9 percent of the general population (Kenny 2000: 105). In 1870, 44.5 percent of the Irish-born lived in the 50 largest cities (ibid.). They remained in these alien urban environments partly because they had no money to move inland and partly because their experience back home as farm laborers and small-scale tenant farmers had not prepared them for success in American agriculture. Once settled, Irish immigrants quickly discovered that their rural, underdeveloped homeland had provided very little in the way of industrial experience or skill, forcing them to the bottom of the occupational hierarchy (Laurie et al. 1975: 240). The result was a concentration of the Irish in big-city tenement slums.

All these circumstances made the Irish quite conspicuous and worked against their rapid assimilation. William H. A. Williams (1996: 1) writes: "Irish Catholics were in many respects the first 'ethnic' group in America . . . the first immigrant group to arrive in extremely large numbers, to gain high visibility by clustering in cities . . . , and to appear sufficiently 'different' in religion and culture so that acceptance by native-born Americans was not automatic, and assimilation was, therefore, prolonged." Although most spoke English in addition to their native Irish (Gaelic), this was insufficient to overcome their various disadvantages.

The native-born U.S. population reacted in part by developing negative Irish stereotypes similar to those associated with bigotry toward African Americans. The long history of English domination of Ireland already had planted notions of Irish inferiority that English immigrants had brought with them in the two centuries before the famine exodus. In fact, the Irish generally were viewed as a separate "race," although the term would hardly be applied to Irish Americans today. The basic elements of the stereotype were innate low intelligence, unreliability, laziness, and (for males) a penchant for drunkenness and fighting. Newspaper and magazine cartoonists of the era often portrayed the Irish with simian features. They were regularly characterized as racially inferior to Americans of Anglo-Saxon origin, even in the pages of respectable intellectual periodicals (Kenny 2006: 366; Lee 2006: 25).

In contrast, the other main non-English immigrant group of the period, the Germans (Cohn 1995), assimilated much more easily. While language was a problem, they were more highly educated and skilled than the Irish. In 1860 German men were most highly concentrated in skilled crafts, in contrast to the Irish, who were disproportionately made up of unskilled laborers (Conley and Galenson 1998: 471). Also, German immigrants had been preceded by numerous fellow "countrymen" during the previous century who had paved the way by establishing themselves economically and socially in America. The stereotypical German was hardworking, disciplined, earnest, and frugal (Gerlach 2002: 39). While the famine Irish had been preceded by a steady stream of Scots-Irish, starting in the early 1700s these non-Gaelic Protestants from the north of Ireland were a distinct group (Chepesiuk 2000). They generally settled in inland rural areas (e.g., Appalachia and the southern Piedmont), and where the two groups coexisted, the Scots-Irish were often antagonistic toward the new immigrants.

The Irish ballplayers circa 1880, during our study period, were mainly the sons of the famine immigrants. While assimilation had clearly begun by this time, it was hardly complete. For example, Kerby A. Miller (1985: 492) notes: "Between 1870 and 1921 Irish-Americans emerged from the near ubiquitous poverty and crippling prejudice of the Famine decades. The process was slow, halting, and incomplete even by 1921." Negative stereotypes lingered after the turn of the twentieth century, and the popular press continued to portray the Irish with simian features at least into the 1890s.

**Early Professional Baseball**

The origin of major-league baseball is usually identified with the 1876 founding of the National League (NL), which has operated continuously to the present day. It joined with the American League in 1903 to form modern Major League Baseball (MLB). The NL's basic business model and operating format at its inception were essentially the same as those of modern professional baseball, as were most playing rules.

There were, however, some important differences circa 1880. First, league membership typically changed from year to year (see Eckard 2005). For example, by 1881 only Boston and Chicago remained of the original eight NL clubs. During 1876-83, 18 cities were represented. The NL had eight teams in each of these years except 1877 and 1878, when it had six.

A second difference was the entry of independent major leagues. In 1882 the American Association (AA) began play, recognized then and now as a second major league. The AA fielded six teams in its first year and eight in its second. It lasted for a decade before merging with the NL in 1892. In 1884 the Union Association (UA) claimed major status, although it lasted but a single season. It was highly unstable with several midseason failures. Including replacements, 13 cities were involved in its eight-team circuit. In response to this entry, the AA expanded to 12 teams for 1884 but with one failure and replacement also included 13 cities. Thus the total number of major-league teams more than doubled from 16 in 1883 to a still record 34 in 1884, with a concurrent significant dilution of player quality.

The season lasted from April to October, nearly as long as today, but fewer games were scheduled. During 1876-83 the number varied from only 60 (1877 and 1878) to 98 (1883), spread more or less evenly over the six-month season. Major-league clubs augmented their "championship" schedule with exhibition games against independent teams. An important difference in playing rules is that midgame player substitutions were allowed only in the case of injury. Thus there was no pinch-hitting, pinch-running, or late-game defensive substitution. Nor was there relief pitching as we know it today. A pitcher removed for poor performance had to trade positions with another player already in the game who could also pitch (called a "change" pitcher). But this seldom occurred; pitchers usually completed over 90 percent of their starts. Partly for this reason, circa 1880 pitchers were used much more intensively than today, with teams relying primarily on only one or two pitchers for the entire season. Also, pitchers often played in the field in games in which they did not pitch.

For all these reasons, rosters seldom had more than a dozen players at any one time, fewer than half the number on modern MLB teams. Clubs often took only 10 men on road trips plus a nonplaying agent of the owners responsible for general supervision and business matters. Player salaries circa 1880 varied roughly from $500 to $2,500, comparable to the wages of skilled craftsmen and many white-collar workers (see Voigt 1983: 56-57, 81). Contracts were typically for a single year, and contrary to myth, "revolving" or contract jumping among major-league teams was virtually nonexistent (Eckard 2001).

The first successful attempt by NL owners to limit competition for players was the partial reserve system introduced in 1880, applying to five players per team. Owners agreed among themselves not to bid for players reserved by other teams. But in 1880 and 1881 a few significant independent clubs still competed for top players (Eckard 2005: 127-28), undermining the resulting monopsony power. The nascent reserve system collapsed in 1882, when the entry of the AA caused a bidding war for players. In 1883 the AA and the NL agreed on a joint system, although it worked imperfectly before collapsing again with the 1884 entry of the UA.